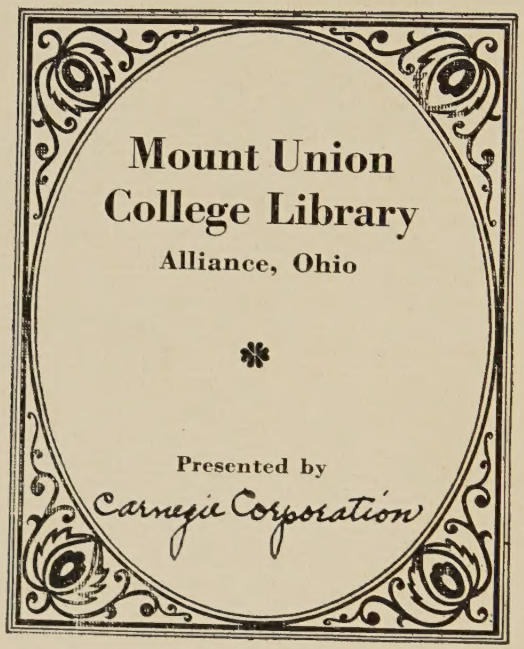

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A HISTORY OF EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY DRAMA 1800–1850

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

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A HISTORY OF EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY DRAMA

1800–1850

BY

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PREFACE

WITH this survey of early nineteenth century theatrical endeavour I am presenting another instalment of that general history of English drama from 1660 onwards, the first portion of which, *A History of Restoration Drama*, appeared six years ago. The same general methods of treatment have been employed here as were employed in the preparation of the earlier volumes, my aim being to provide a guide both to the theatrical tendencies and to the dramatic activities of the period. These methods preclude the study of minor problems, but it is in the hope that this mapping out of the country to be surveyed may lead other scholars to enter more deeply into uncharted land that I have written these volumes. Up to the present, save for scattered articles and a few works devoted to specialised aspects of the subject, nothing of a comprehensive study of early nineteenth century dramatic conditions has been attempted. Professor Watson's excellent *Sheridan to Robertson* is the nearest approach to such a study, and in that work the author does not profess to deal with dramatic, as apart from theatrical, history.

The present survey is accompanied by an appendix (unduly bulky, I fear) containing a list of plays produced between the years 1800 and 1850. This is arranged according to the plan adopted in the Hand-list to the 1750–1800 volume. The difficulty of compilation will be realised when it is noted that, while the years 1660–1700 produced about 600 plays, the years 1700–1750 a little less than 2,000, and the years 1750–1800 about 3,200, in this period I have had to list between 10,000 and 12,000 titles. Happily good fortune in the discovery of sources has followed me. For the Restoration and early eighteenth century the documents in the Public Record Office cast a good deal of light on the theatre and drama of the time; and the finding of the Larpent collection in the Henry E. Huntington Library (through the kind offices of the Keeper of Manuscripts there) provided a considerable amount of interesting material for the latter half of the eighteenth century.

This Larpent collection contains plays dating up to the year 1824, so that it is of service here too; but in addition to that, I have found, through a suggestion made to me by my friend, Dr J. M. Bulloch, the collection of dramatic MSS. from 1824 to 1850 in the possession of the Lord Chamberlain's Office. For permission to make use of this I have to thank the Lord Chamberlain; at the same time I should like to extend my thanks to his Chief Clerk, whose courteous assistance greatly expedited the rather arduous labour of examination and note-taking. Full details of the contents of the Larpent (L.) and Lord Chamberlain (L.C.) collections are given in the present Hand-list. Whatever value the texts of my volumes may have, I feel that I have been able to do something for the study of English dramatic literature by the preparation of these appendices, which serve the double purpose of stage-list and "bibliography." They may be, almost certainly are, incomplete, for only after years of detailed study could we hope to provide anything in the nature of an exhaustive catalogue of the plays acted and printed during this period. The lists provided here, however, will be found to contain thousands of dramas which have hitherto never been mentioned in any works on the theatre of this time or in any of the dramatic "encyclopædias."

As regards the whole subject with which this book deals, it might perhaps be said that, lacking for the most part the qualities of literature, the plays of this time do not deserve the attention which has been devoted to them here. From one point of view, this criticism is just. As plays, the works of the poets fail; and as works of imagination, the countless farces and melodramas are of no value. Yet there is another side to this question. This is the period that gave us an array of brilliant poets from Wordsworth to Browning, as well as a line of distinguished novelists from Scott to George Eliot. No manifestation of literary endeavour during this time can, therefore, be negligible. From a study of their relations to the theatre, much light may be thrown upon these major writers and upon their audiences. Moreover, this is, historically, an important age, for it is the link between the old and the new,

between the post-chaise and the railway, between Sheridan and Robertson. It is impossible to take up the study of modern drama intelligently without understanding to the full that which went before, and it was largely in an endeavour to establish a basis for the appreciation of English dramatic history that I planned originally my series of connected studies.

In the preparation of this work I have been greatly aided by the facilities afforded me by the Lord Chamberlain, through whom I was permitted to copy out the entire entries in the Play Catalogue at his office in St James's Palace and to consult the library of manuscript copies of early nineteenth century dramas. I have also to offer my thanks to the authorities of the Henry E. Huntington Library, for providing me with a photostat copy of the catalogue (in manuscript) of the Larpent collection of plays preserved there, and for giving me permission to give citations therefrom. Like all students, I have, too, to express my gratefulness to the authorities of the British Museum, the Bodleian, the London Library and the Harvard University Library. On my finding that some volumes of *The Times* in the British Museum were incomplete, the librarian to *The Times* office kindly gave me facilities for the consultation of the earlier files preserved there. Practically all the work involved in the preparation of this survey I have undertaken myself, but I should wish to thank Mr W. G. Hargest for doing some checking of dates. In the Hand-list are incorporated some half-dozen notes regarding MSS. in the possession of Mr Crompton Rhodes, whom I thank for the information concerning them. For details regarding the Dibdins I owe much to Mr Rimbault Dibdin, who kindly placed at my disposal his collections relating to the works of those members of his family. The proofs of the first volume were read by Mr John Parker, to whose generosity I am deeply indebted.

A. N.

EAST LONDON COLLEGE
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Appendix B

HAND-LIST OF PLAYS PRODUCED BETWEEN 1800 AND 1850

CHAPTER I

THE THEATRE

I. *Introductory*

IN the year 1801 there was billed to appear at one of the "minor" theatres a certain precocious child named as "Master Carey, the Pupil of Nature." While never rivalling the attraction later exercised by "the infant Roscius" (young Betty), Master Carey seems to have caused a little sensation among the novelty-loving audience of the period, and that sensation was no doubt stimulated when it was noised abroad that the clever child was a great-grandson of no less a person than the facetious Harry Carey, author of *Chrononhotonthologos* and of the still more famous *Sally in our Alley*, both still played or sung in those years. The sensation, however, would have been yet greater had the spectators of the period possessed a divining insight to display to them the future glory of the dark-eyed child-actor. Many of those who saw the boy Carey acting in 1801 at a minor theatre no doubt flocked to the patent houses in 1814 to witness the same boy, now grown into a man, seize with the powerful hand of a master upon the emotions of the playhouse and interpret Shakespeare in a manner all his own. The Master Carey of 1801 had returned to gain mature triumph under the name of Edmund Kean.

This concrete example serves to indicate how close, in time and generation, were the ties between the early nineteenth century and the days when first the sprightly rimes and dainty tunes of *The Beggar's Opera* charmed the fashionable society of London. It serves, moreover, to show how much closer even are the ties which bind the age of Coleridge with the twentieth century. Edmund Kean himself to modern youth lives in an antiquity not nearly so far removed as that in which Garrick shone. His son, Charles Kean, was acting till 1868, and with Charles Kean we are at least stepping on to the threshold of the theatre of today. In a

word, linked as the early nineteenth century may be with the life of the preceding Georgian era, there is something which tells us that a passage over the year 1800 will carry us at once into the midst of an epoch which seems to be, or at least gives the definite foundation for, that which we call modern. The connections are everywhere apparent. The gayer costumes, wrought in brocade and delicate with silk, give way to sober pantaloons and dress-coats. Victoria ascends the throne in 1837 and carries her reign on to 1901. Ellen Terry first appeared as Mamilius in *The Winter's Tale* on April 28, 1856; Dame Madge Kendal preceded her by playing the Blind Child in *The Seven Poor Travellers* in 1852; both were born in the same year, 1848. Definite links, some literary, some historic, some by personal relations, easily carry the mind back to this half-century, and the mental picture has a certain nearness and precision lacking in the more artificial revisualisations of Augustan or Caroline times[1]. This fact gives a peculiar charm to a study of the age, and as a result the drama and theatre of the period have for us an interest greater than, and distinct from, that which we feel for the efforts of previous eras.

On the other hand, to counter this impression of modernity and this apparent interest, there confronts us the almost total ignorance displayed by theatre-lovers of today concerning the fortunes of the theatres during those fifty years. There are numbers who have read the poetic plays written by the romanticists; a few have penetrated as far as Sheridan Knowles or Douglas Jerrold; one or two dramas of this time, such as *Money* and *Box and Cox*, have come down to us in living form[2]; some of the older generation may remember

[1] One instance of the material bonds connecting the present period with the earlier has lately come to my notice. A friend of mine, himself a poetic dramatist, informs me that his father had a play performed in 1820 at Drury Lane. He had been born in the same year as Shelley.

[2] Occasionally stock companies in minor theatres, or those touring the lesser circuits, make use of the early nineteenth century repertoire. Some old melodramas have lately been revived at the Elephant and Castle, while one or two of Colman's comedies are still performed in the provinces. Amateurs, too, ransacking French's and Dicks' old stock sometimes find here treasure-trove.

their fathers' accounts of the days of Phelps and Macready; but of deeper knowledge concerning the progress or retrogression of the theatres there is practically nothing save among a few enthusiasts. The age seems nearer, yet theatrically it is in some ways further off, than the period when the elder Colman and Foote produced their now seldom remembered comedies. It is the object of the present book to outline at least the main features of the playhouse and dramatic development during those years, and to provide a general background for the possible study, along more specialised lines, of particular plays or of particular movements in the world of the theatre.

As the publication of many volumes of anecdotal character show, the theatre of this time exercises an undoubted fascination, even when exacter knowledge be lacking. Little space, of course, can be devoted here to the careers of the famous actors and actresses who thronged the boards, but, even when we leave the Macreadys, the Keans and the Ellen Trees aside, we find in the playhouse itself ample materials for our careful and interested consideration[1]. The

[1] The lives of the more famous actors of this time have been often told, and naturally many of these biographies contain matter of considerable general value. Among the more important volumes the following may be specially noted as contributing towards the history of the theatre: James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble* (2 vols. 1825); James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs Siddons* (2 vols. 1827); Barry Cornwall, *The Life of Edmund Kean* (2 vols. 1835); F. W. Hawkins, *The Life of Edmund Kean* (2 vols. 1869); J. W. Cole, *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, F.S.A. Including a Summary of the English Stage for the last Fifty Years* (2 vols. 1859); *Macready's Reminiscences...edited by Sir Frederick Pollock* (2 vols. 1875); W. Archer, *W. C. Macready* (1890); *The Life of Charles James Mathews....With Selections from his Correspondence....Edited by Charles Dickens* (2 vols. 1879); *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi. Edited by "Boz"* (2 vols. 1838); and C. E. Pearce, *Madame Vestris and her Times* (1923). Details concerning other works are included in R. W. Lowe, *A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature* (1888). The newspapers of the age contain very full accounts of production and of acting. Hazlitt's reviews were collected together in one volume as *A View of the English Stage; or, A Series of Dramatic Criticisms* (1818; reprinted 1821, 1851, and, with an important introduction by W. Archer and edited by R. W. Lowe, in 1895 as *Dramatic Essays*). The reviews of Leigh Hunt likewise appeared as *Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres, including general Observations on the Practise and Genius of the Stage* (1807). Some valuable *obiter dicta* occur in *Oxberry's*

age, it is true, but carries on traditions started towards the end of the eighteenth century, but pioneer work is always of less permanent interest than the full development of that which before has been but vaguely prophesied. The greatest event of the time was, of course, the Act "for regulating theatres[1]," by which the monopoly held since 1660 by Drury Lane and Covent Garden was definitely ended. This, like all the innovations of the fifty years, was not unheralded in earlier times. In the eighteenth century, apart from the opera-house licences, the Haymarket had secured a limited warrant, the minor houses at Sadler's Wells and elsewhere were producing their musical and spectacular shows, and an ill-fated attempt had been made at the Royalty to break down the patent monopoly[2]. The final victory of the "minors" was secured by following up the lines of the earlier attack. The "burlettas[3]" permitted to them were widened as far as the laws allowed, and persistent efforts were made to raise at least a third patent playhouse in London. In 1808 a Bill was for this purpose introduced in the House of Commons, but was defeated[4]. Two years later a fresh effort was

Dramatic Biography, and Histrionic Anecdotes (1825–7), and in *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography, or The Green-Room Spy* (1827).

It may be advisable here to mention also some books and articles which are of special value for the study of the drama during this period. The survey of E. B. Watson, *Sheridan to Robertson* (1926), contains much matter of interest both on players and playwrights. Harold Child has an important, though short, study on *Nineteenth-Century Drama* in the *C.H.E.L.* vol. xiii. Important for its critical judgments is A. Filon, *The English Stage* (1897; translation of *Le théâtre anglais*, 1893). Genest, of course, carries his account down to 1830. On the poetic drama see E. Gosse, *The Revival of Poetic Drama* (*Atlantic Monthly*, xc), and U. C. Nag, *The English Theatre of the Romantic Revival* (*Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1928). There are, also, several important Memoirs or Autobiographies by dramatists of the time, such as Blanchard, Fitzball, Dibdin and Reynolds. These are cited later. Fuller bibliographies are to be found in E. B. Watson, *op. cit.*, and the *C.H.E.L.*

[1] Statutes 6 and 7 of Victoria c. 68. Comment on this Act appears in nearly all the later memoirs of the period. Among other recent works Ernest Bradlee Watson's *Sheridan to Robertson* (1926) and Watson Nicholson's *The Struggle for a Free Stage* (1906) should be consulted.

[2] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 230.

[3] On this term see *infra*, pp. 137–40.

[4] See Frederick Howard, Earl of Carlisle, *Thoughts upon the present Condition of the Stage, and upon the Construction of a new Theatre* (1808).

made[1], and was again unsuccessful. In 1813 another Third Theatre Bill was defeated in the Commons[2]. Legal defeat, however, simply urged the lesser managers to renewed efforts; burlettas were produced not far different from the ordinary dramatic fare in the major houses, and persistent attempts were made to question the validity of the old patents. The consequences were a formal decision on the part of the Solicitor-General that the vaunted strength of the original grants made to Killigrew and D'Avenant in 1660 was purely a fiction[3], and a series of meetings designed to bring the matter once more before Parliament. T. J. Thackeray had stirred men to review the whole subject[4], and as a result at the Albion Tavern on Dec. 4 and 31, 1831, and at the City of London Tavern on Feb. 24, 1832, there gathered together groups of dramatists and others interested in the theatre for the purpose of drafting a fresh petition. Lord Lytton brought in a Bill the same year, and the *Report* of a Select Committee[5], produced on Aug. 2, 1832, gave it approval. The Bill, however, after passing the Commons, was defeated in the Lords (1833). The failure, on the other hand, was by no means so complete as had been that of earlier endeavours of a similar kind, so that the adoption of the later Act of 1843 need affect us with no surprise. Here was no sudden decision, but the triumph of long effort, the reward of the hard and devoted labour of years. It may seem that, while the new Act marks a great turning-point so far as theatrical legislation is concerned, there is little change in the drama after that date; we may draw attention to the fact that, while many new

[1] See the *Account of the Proceedings before His Majesty's most Hon. Privy Council, upon a Petition for a Third Theatre in the Metropolis* (unpublished, 1810). A petition was sent by the trustees of Drury Lane protesting against the proposed erection of the third playhouse. See also *The London Chronicle*, March 17 and 20, 1810.

[2] See James Lawrence, *Dramatic Emancipation* (1813).

[3] For the granting of the original patents see *A History of Restoration Drama*, pp. 270–1. The value of the patents had been destroyed (1) by the Union of the Companies in 1682 (*id.* pp. 296–7), (2) by the granting of a licence to Betterton in 1695 (*id.* p. 301), and (3) by the formal surrender of one of the patents in the eighteenth century in return for a licence.

[4] See his *Theatrical Emancipation* (1832).

[5] Moved by Lytton on May 31, 1832.

theatres were erected in the early years of the century, none was built from 1845 to 1866; but, if there was no immediate change, there was unquestionably laid the foundation of that theatrical liberty which permitted the production later of our modern dramatic literature. The earlier efforts are a heritage of eighteenth century striving; the Theatre Regulation Act belongs to the period which carries us on to our own days.

Besides this truly epoch-making change, there were many movements in the half-century which proved to be the origins of later tendencies. The eighteenth century had inaugurated the correct costuming and setting of historical plays, but Macklin's Scots attire for *Macbeth* was only a tentative experiment; archæology did not take full possession of the theatre until the days of Macready and of Kean. These actor-managers, although they worked in gas-light and in ignorance, had the ideals which resulted in the better-known efforts of Irving and of Tree. Dramatically, the age produced, out of the welter of melodrama, the origins of that form which, adopted and perfected by Tom Robertson, marked the beginnings of the modern realistic movement. Technically, it gave scene painters and machinists who proved to be the masters of those of later years. In regard to material arrangements, it introduced stalls and reserved seats and a dozen other little theatrical conveniences which are familiar in the playhouses of today.

This period is, above all others, the period of change in the theatre. The eighteenth century, in spite of its numerous innovations, clung to traditions which had their original being in the Elizabethan age. In acting, in dramatic workmanship, and in management Garrick and his companions joined hands with Alleyn and Shakespeare. About the year 1800 the new age was born, and, while in many ways the lyric poets of the Romantic era seem nearer to Sidney and Spenser than to Pope and Prior, the theatre and all connected with the theatre broke the bonds of the past and established that playhouse which exists among us today. For evil or for good, the old had given way to the new. We may easily trace the stages by

which the journey was made, for this, like all changes in the world of art, was not the affair of a moment. We may even go back and see in Lillo the father of realistic drama, in the innovations of 1770–90 the genesis of Kemble's and Macready's efforts; but fundamentally the fifty years after 1800 are modern, the fifty years before are ancient.

Considering this modernity of the period and also the wealth of critical matter contained in books of anecdotes, in biographies, in playbills and in newspapers[1], it will be understood that only a comparatively small proportion of the evidence available for the student can be presented here. Descriptions abound of the performances and productions of the major actor-managers, but in this survey we must be content to review certain selected and typical notices. The same is true of the drama. Texts of melodramas and farces are included in the many invaluable but often eye-straining collections of Cumberland, Lacy, French and Dicks, but to discuss even one-tenth of the plays produced during these years would be far beyond the scope of this volume. The Hand-list given as an appendix preserves the titles; the text must present only the chosen few which seem most symbolic of tendencies in the age. What we want is not a confused conglomeration of unassimilated facts, but a broader survey of the period as a whole, into which we may fit those individual facts observed in the course of our researches.

II. *The Audience*

The nineteenth century theatre opened badly. Conflagrations which destroyed the two patent theatres within

[1] This period saw the appearance of the definitely theatrical newspaper. There are a number of earlier periodicals of the first decades, mention of which will be made later. Here may be noted the establishment of *The Era* in 1838, and of *The Theatrical Times* in 1847. Among other similar publications *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829–31), *The Dramatic Gazette* (1830–1), *The Dramatic and Musical Review* (1842–4), *The Theatrical Inquisitor* (1812–21), *The Theatrical Observer* (1821–76), *The Theatrical Examiner* (1823–8), and *The Theatrical Journal* (1839–73) will be found of special value.

a space of twelve months were serious enough[1], but worse for the drama was the audience which playwright and player alike had to appeal to and please. All contemporaries are agreed on one thing; the spectators in the larger theatres during the first decades of the century were often licentious and debased, while those in the minor playhouses were vulgar, unruly and physically obnoxious. The tumult in a nineteenth century theatre was one of those things which bound it to the theatres of the past. *The Theatrical Repertory; or, Weekly Rosciad* for Monday, Dec. 28, 1801, describes, without too much horror, a disturbance which took place at a Covent Garden performance of *Richard III*:

> A ruffian in the Two Shilling Gallery threw a quart bottle upon the Stage, which fell so near Mr Betterton as to strike the hat which he held in his hand, but fortunately did no injury either to that gentleman or any of the other performers.

There was a "Tailors' Riot" at a benefit of the actor Downton at Haymarket on Aug. 15, 1805[2]. "There was much fighting," says a critic of a performance of *The Pirate's Doom* at the Adelphi on Feb. 12, 1827[3], "which probably would have been more effective, but for a real battle in the pit, to which the screams of the women imparted a truth and reality, that quite spoilt the effect of the stage combats." A riot during a performance of a French play at Drury Lane in 1848 recalls the earlier *Chinese Festival* disturbances[4]. These riots and disturbances, which thus remind us of the theatres of Dryden and of Cibber, were set in a constant noise and confusion. Here is Hazlitt's picture:

> Everything...has its draw-backs; and the Little Theatre in the Haymarket is not without them. If, for example, a party of

[1] On the theatres see Appendix A. R. W. Lowe in his *Bibliographical Account*, p. 98, mentions a pamphlet entitled *An authentic account of the fire which destroyed Drury Lane Theatre*; this apparently he had not seen and I have failed to discover an extant copy. A similar *Account* (1808) of the burning of Covent Garden (*op. cit.* p. 72) seems also to have disappeared. A description of the old and new theatres there will be found in the interesting *Covent Garden Journal* of 1810.

[2] See Thomas Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror* (1808), i. 154–5, and R. B. Peake, *Memoirs of the Colman Family* (1841), ii. 309.

[3] *The Theatrical Observer*, T. 13/2/1827.

[4] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 5–6.

elderly gentlewomen should come into a box close at your elbow, and immediately begin to talk loud... your only chance is either to quit the house altogether, or...to remove to the very opposite side of it....At the great Theatres, it is sometimes very difficult to hear, for the noise and quarrelling in the gallery; here the only interruption to the performance is from the overflowing garrulity and friendly tittle-tattle of the boxes. The gods...at Drury-lane and Covent-garden, we suspect, "keep such a dreadful pudder o'er our heads," from their impatience at not being able to hear what is passing below; and, at the minor theatres, are the most quiet and attentive of the audience[1].

At both the major and the minor theatres, companies of "*would-be* young men of fashion" would indulge in

the witty explosion of six-penny crackers. This is now an old joke as well as a bad one,—but it still affords amusement to some courageous and gallant Gentlemen, for it never fails to frighten the women; and, from the difficulty of detection, they feel perfectly secure from the angry indignation of those who could resent it[2].

Colman the younger, who had experienced the difficulties involved by such behaviour, has his comment upon it:

Whence arise the deafening vociferations, when there is a full house, of "turn him out!" and "throw him over?" Why is a vocal performer so often kept on a see-saw, called back, sent off, called back again, about the *encore* of a song, and at last, after ten minutes, perhaps, of confusion, obliged to sing it in the midst of the "tumult and disorder" of a divided audience?

Again, why is a play, on the first exhibition of a Christmas Pantomime, acted almost in dumb-show, like the mummery that is to follow it, in consequence of the "tumult and disorder" of the spectators?...Why, during the intervals, is the stage strewed with apples, and orange-peels, accompanied in their descent thither, by the shouts, groans, whistles, catcalls, yells, and screeches of the turbulent assemblage which has so elegantly impelled its vegetable projectiles from the upper regions?...Why are disturbances in the upper boxes, and lobbies, among blackguards and women of the town, by no means rare?[3]

[1] W. Hazlitt, *op. cit.* ed. 1821, p. 133.

[2] Newspaper cutting in Shaw Collection, Harvard, dated 25/9/1814. I have failed to identify the original paper.

[3] R. B. Peake, *Memoirs of the Colman Family* (1841), ii. 364–5.

The notorious "O.P. Riots" were thus in no ways exceptional[1], and probably Thomas Dibdin was right when he declared in his *Harlequin Hoax* (Lyc. 1814) that only at a pantomime were the spectators "very silent and attentive" while "tragedies, comedies, operas, and farces are doom'd to suffer all the complicated combinations of 'Pray ask that gentleman to sit down,' 'Box Keeper, where's my fourth row on the second circle?' 'Take off your hat,' and 'Keep quiet in the lobby.'...In a Pantomime...the moment the curtain goes up, if any unfortunate gentleman speak a word, they make no reply but throw him over directly[2]." Various actor-managers attempted to make improvements, but not always with success; even in 1841 Macready found opponents in the press when he tried to stem the "improper intrusion" associated with certain parts of Drury Lane[3]. "The feelings of performers," says a writer in *Oxberry's Theatrical Inquisitor*[4], speaking of Easter pieces, "are martyred by playing to a noisy, drunken set of auditors, who are impatient throughout the play, from an anticipation of the 'glorious pageantry' that a specious program-matical play-bill has prepared them for," while Sir Walter Scott reflects grimly that the theatres in general are "destined to company so scandalous, that persons not very nice in their taste of society, must yet exclaim against the abuse as a national nuisance"—"prostitutes and their admirers usually" forming "the principal part of the audience[5]." Even the ordinary

[1] The history of this long and clamorous warfare between indignant spectators and the managers of the new theatre at Covent Garden has often been told. The pamphlets and books issued in connection therewith are detailed in R. W. Lowe's bibliography, occupying no less than four pages (pp. 72–6). In addition to the works cited there see *The Theatrical Journal* for 1846 and 1862, William Dunlap's *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke* (1813), ii. 101–17, and *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds* (1827), ii. 380–6.

[2] The speaker is Miss Kelly in the opening scene. One may note the references to the hat trouble and the implication that there were reserved rows, if not reserved seats.

[3] William Archer, *William Charles Macready* (1890), p. 111, and *The Theatrical Observer*, Oct. 6, 1841. *The Theatrical Journal* for July 27, 1844, styled the theatres "great public brothels."

[4] 1828, p. 109.

[5] *Essay on Drama* (originally published in 1819), *Prose Works* (Edinburgh, 1834), vi. 392.

critics of the newspapers took constant notice of these abuses. "We regret to observe," says the dramatic correspondent to *The Times* in 1801[1], "that no measures have been yet taken to prevent the indecent and scandalous conduct of the loungers, both male and female, who infest the lobby of the Theatre," and his remark is but one of many. There can be no doubt, when thus we find anonymous critics, playwrights, theatre-lovers and actors all united, that the auditorium of an early nineteenth century playhouse was a place lacking both in taste and in good manners, a place where vulgarity abounded, where true appreciation of the drama was subordinated, not to witty if somewhat improper badinage as in the Restoration theatre, but to rude and foolish practical jokes, to the roaring of a drunken bully, to the besotted solicitations of a prostitute. Such an audience necessarily reacted both upon actor and upon dramatist, and a good deal of the roughness in texture in the histrionic art and in the ordinary theatrical fare of the time must be credited to these spectators who were, in the opinion of Sir Walter Scott, nothing less than "a national nuisance."

So far as the general appearance of the theatrical auditorium in which these spectators sat was concerned, there was but little general change from the conditions established in the preceding century, although in a hundred small ways approach was being made towards the present-day playhouse. As some of the extracts quoted above go to show, the sharp division into pit, box and gallery was retained from the earlier years, and, in spite of the fact that the rudeness of the "gods" seemed to have descended upon those who occupied the more fashionable portions of the theatre, the distinctions in taste seem also to have been retained. This division is expressly mentioned, with some variations, in Dallas' *Not at Home* (Lyc. 1809):

> In saying the PUBLIC, I am glad of this opportunity of stating what I mean by that word at a Theatre. I mean that cultivated Company who usually occupy the circle of dress boxes; I mean those judicious Critics who take their station in the Pit; I mean

[1] *The Times*, Monday, Aug. 3, 1801, regarding the Little Theatre or Theatre Royal in the Haymarket.

my worthy friend John Bull, who is to be found in either Gallery. ...I do not mean the self-conceited, ephemeral Pseudo-critics of the age, who, after attempting in vain to foist their writings on the public, have sunk into the critics immortalized by Pope.... Neither do I mean those rare spirits who love to make a noise in the slips of a theatre, and to condemn what they do not understand[1].

Pit, box, and gallery—as Planché lilts:

Ye belles and ye beaux,
Who adorn our low rows
Ye gods, who preside in the high ones;
Ye critics, who sit
All so snug in the pit,—
An assemblage of clever and sly ones![2]

There were no stalls in the earlier days, and the pit served alternately for "Fops' Alley[3]" and for its more regular "sage grave rulers" who were the "Imperial arbitrors of taste and wit[4]." Stalls came gradually towards the end of the period, ousting the severer critics and causing a change of orientation in the acting, but throughout the greater part of this period the fundamental distinctions divided the audience into clearly marked groups[5]. Gradually, however, the changing conditions made themselves felt, and Professor Watson is undoubtedly right in tracing to the introduction

[1] Preface.

[2] *Olympic Revels* (Olympic, 1831).

[3] See note to Planché's *Success* (Adel. 1825) in the 1879 edition of his *Extravaganzas* (i. 34). The term descends from Restoration days (see *A History of Restoration Drama*, p. 11).

[4] Dimond's *The Sea-Side Story* (C.G. 1801), Prologue.

[5] G. C. D. Odell in his *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (1921), ii. 242–3, quotes a Haymarket bill of 1843 which, he thinks, marks the beginning of the stalls and of reserved seats. Watson, *op. cit.* p. 87, cites as the earliest reference to stalls a French Lyceum advertisement in *The Companion* on Jan. 31, 1828. There is an interesting note in *The Dramatic Magazine* of 1829 (pp. 159–60) regarding the Theatre Royal at Liverpool. "A new regulation has been adopted at the box-keeper's office....On taking places in the boxes, a slip of paper is given to the party, containing the date on which places were taken, the name of the parties, the number of places, and the number of the box. This arrangement is well calculated to put an end to these clamorous altercations and appeals to the box-keeper, by which an audience is so often annoyed while the first act of the play is proceeding." Evidently the provinces were well abreast of, if they did not actually anticipate, the metropolis. The earliest reference to the "dress-circle" that I have found is in *Oxberry's Theatrical Inquisitor* for 1828 (p. 36).

of stalls a change in histrionic technique during the last years of this period[1]. These stalls, more highly priced, were frequented by people of society, and there were thus removed from the reflected glow of the footlights and the stage-lighting those front rows of old "pittites," critical and eager to appreciate at its full worth the play that was being enacted before them. The robust performances that had pleased in 1810 began to fall flat and, after an indeterminate period when those actors who had been trained in earlier standards found to their amazement that the tricks which pleased of yore now met with no applause, there gradually came into being a fresh style of acting, simpler and less inclined towards exaggeration, which provided the material upon which a Lytton and, in other years, a Robertson were to work. Perhaps, too, the introduction of the stalls, added to the severer moral tone of a Victorian epoch, aided in reforming the general character of the playhouse. The presence of fashionable and respectable women in the front of the old pit must have aided at least in subduing the more clamorous denizens of that region and in establishing that highly decorous tone which distinguishes the theatre of today[2].

That these various portions of the playhouse demanded, as in previous years, the careful attention of the managers, the playwrights and the actors, may well be imagined, and there is plentiful evidence remaining to testify to the nature of their tastes. One thing we notice at the very start—the comparative simplicity of the average spectator. This is exemplified in the popularity of the melodrama, which, in spite of a number of travesties and burlesques, seems to have been accepted in a serious spirit. Even more typical is the patriotic enthusiasm of the day. In earlier times classic tragedies might contain many an overt significance; Whigs and Tories applauded vigorously during the first performance of *Cato* because each believed that individual sentences bore reference to their political ideals. Nothing of this do we

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 89.

[2] Vocal disapprobation of a new play may yet be heard in London theatres, as the recent production of *Sirocco* testifies; but obviously such outbursts are rare and are in any case confined to occasional first nights.

find in the early nineteenth century; veiled reference gives place to direct and simple exposition. Audiences enjoyed, not the vaguely symbolic or allusive drama, but the "spectacle" which presented to them national facts unadorned save by the trappings of the patriotic imagination. It was in such pieces as *The Battle of the Nile* (S.W. 1815), *The Battle of Trafalgar; or, The Death of Nelson* (Cob. 1824), or *The Naval Victory and Triumph of Lord Nelson* (H.[1] 1805) that they delighted. They loved to see the military and naval events of their own and of immediately preceding generations presented to them in mimic form upon the stage.

This political note is accompanied by another which may be styled the domestic, or, more precisely, the familiar. Here as evidence can be adduced the innumerable "domestic dramas" which crowd the pages of the appendix to this survey; it is all part of that movement towards realism which accompanies the visionary flights of the Romantic imagination. What, however, most surely characterises the age is not merely the domestic subject matter, for that we had in Heywood and Lillo and have still in Galsworthy, but the familiarity of some of the themes. "My," "You" and "Our" appear in hundreds of play titles—*My Album* (St J. 1838), *My Friend from Town* (Queen's, 1831), *Our House* (S.W. 1842), *Our New Governess* (Lyc. 1845), *You can't marry your Grandmother* (Olym. 1838), *You Know What* (S.W. 1842)—and when we add these to others of the "How" type—*How to Live without Money* (S.W. 1830), *How to Settle Accounts with your Laundress* (Adel. 1847)—we realise that here we have a highly typical feature of the dramatic tastes of the time. Immediately, this produced nothing but melodrama and rather trivial farce; ultimately it was to have its importance in the building up of the foundation for the deeper and more profound domestic drama of today.

Most characteristic of all, however, is the moral sentiment of the time. Exemplified among critics, dramatists and spectators, this "Victorianism[1]," which subtly differs from

[1] It is, of course, marked long before the actual accession of Queen Victoria.

the sentimentalism of the preceding decades, must be taken fully into account when we consider the failure of contemporary tragedy and comedy. Sentimentalism of the older sort gave us the many sympathetic dramas of the period; all the "Dumb Girls" and "Blind Boys[1]" are the progeny of this mood. The "Victorian" morality exercised an influence more negative than positive, and succeeded rather in killing free expression than in producing something entirely new. A few examples may serve to make this clear. *The Double Dealer* was revived, almost certainly in an altered form, at Drury Lane on Saturday, Feb. 27, 1802, and *The Theatrical Repertory* on the first of the following month came forth with weighty fulminations:

> Such a trough-full of villainy and lewdness was surely never before kneaded together...down, down with it to the lowest pit of hell; and there let devils act the parts, and devils only be the auditors![2]

Well: one cannot say much more than that, and, if the critics took this lead, what wonder if the spectators and, after them, the playwrights, followed? There is nothing very seriously wrong with Lacy's *The Two Friends* (H.[2] 1828), but both reviewers and audiences saw it as "one of the most immoral and dangerous dramas" that had ever been written, "loudly demanding the censure of all who regard the well-being of society[3]." It is one of the jests of literature that, in this age of such decorous and sentimentally moral dramas, a reviewer could declare that "now it is almost dangerous to take a young person to a play-house[4]." One can imagine the indelicate sallies this must raise among the shades of Etherege and Wycherley as they sit wittily over their ambrosial wine. For the dramatists the aim naturally was to please by inculcating some moral, to avoid offending public taste.

[1] E.g. Farrell's *The Dumb Girl of Genoa* (Bath, 1823) and the anonymous *The Blind Orphan* (Surrey, 1833).

[2] No. XXIV.

[3] *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829), p. 194. It must be confessed, however, that the reviewer in *Oxberry's Theatrical Inquisitor* (1828), p. 194, saw nothing improper in the play.

[4] *Id.*

"In all," Mrs Inchbald's "anxious hope" in writing *To Marry, or Not to Marry* (C.G. 1805)

> was still to find
> Some useful moral for the feeling mind[1].

One Lumley St George Skeffington, who wrote the prologue to Dimond's *Adrian and Orrila* (C.G. 1806), found this morality the greatest achievement of the nineteenth century theatre:

> Long has the Stage, determined to impart
> Such scenes alone as meliorate the heart,
> Barr'd from all avenues, with rigid sway,
> Plots which corrupt, and maxims that betray...
> Proud of no praise, of no distinction vain,
> Unless distinguish'd in the moral train...
> Licentious follies rarely intervene,
> And truth and sense, and honour claim the scene!

Truth and honour, perhaps—but the dramatists often seemed to lose their sense of humour in their frantic endeavours to be polite. In Somerset's *A Day after the Fair* (Olym. 1829) Jerry has to come in as Mademoiselle Dumplino, but as that *diva* is supposed to be only $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet tall, Jerry is made to kneel on a little stool on rollers. In the course of the scene he rises to his own six feet of height, and at this point the author deems it necessary to give us a footnote:

> The little stool on rollers is fastened round Jerry's waist, and, of course, when he rises, is concealed by his wide petticoats. The effect is exceedingly comic, for, when he stands on his legs, his female garb only extends to his knees, *yet there is no indecency in this, as he has stockings, &c. on underneath.*

I am glad of the presence of that "&c."

Perhaps the morality, however, was only specious, after all. It is, at least, noticeable that both dramatists and audiences, even if they would have nothing to do with Wycherley and his peers, seemed to take a sneaking interest in the affairs of the Restoration court. Jerrold produces his *Nell Gwynne* (C.G. 1833), where, of course, the one-time orange-girl and the king's mistress plays a most becoming

[1] Prologue.

part; Wilks pens *The King's Wager* (Vic. 1837) with Charles himself as a central figure; Moncrieff writes his *Rochester; or, King Charles the Second's Merry Days* (Olym. 1818), in which two court ladies gull the witty rakes; and Knowles deals with a Charles II theme in *Woman's Wit* (C.G. 1838). Perhaps more than one spectator and more than one author of the age inwardly echoed the desire expressed by a stage damsel a century before and wished that he had been born in good King Somebody's days[1].

The censor, for his part, was determined that the audience should get nothing of good King Somebody's merriment. When the century opened, the official reader of plays was that John Larpent who quietly converted to his own uses the dramatic manuscripts submitted to him in the course of his long career. On his death, George Colman the younger was appointed to the post on Jan. 19, 1824, and in his turn was followed by Charles Kemble (appointed on Nov. 2, 1836) and John Mitchell Kemble (appointed Feb. 24, 1840). Concerning the ways of Larpent and Colman we have ample information. Both were officious rather than official in their duties. The one, guilty of what is tantamount to larceny, and the other, often licentious in his own early plays, forgot their own peccadilloes and insisted on the utmost decency, piety and loyalty from the miserable dramatists whose lords they were. The best account of Larpent's methods is told in the preface to Theodore Hook's *Killing No Murder* (H.[2] 1809). In the course of his enquiries Hook discovered

> that John Larpent, Esq. was *clerk* at the Privy Seal Office, that John Larpent, Esq. was *deputy* to John Larpent, Esq. and that the *deputy's secretary* was John Larpent, Esq.

This gentleman had censored the character of a Methodist in Hook's play, declaring that the "Government did not wish the Methodists to be ridiculed." The author found later that the official reader was "not only a rigid methodist himself, but...had even built a little tabernacle of his own." Happily

[1] See *A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 160.

for Hook, however, he was able to add an advertisement to his printed play, thanking Larpent

for refusing his licence, and creating an interest for the farce[1].

Colman was no less particular. Not only did he object to any play the plot of which concerned rebellion, but he imposed a rigorous censorship upon all kinds of expletives. "Oh Gods" were anathema to him, and the dramatic lovers were not even permitted to call their mistresses angels. From Jerrold's *The Rent Day* (D.L. 1832) this official cut out several "Gods" and "damns" together with the following sentences:

"Heaven be kind to us, for I've almost lost all [other] hope."
"Isn't that an angel?" "I can't tell; I've not been used to such company."
"I love you, and may heaven pardon and protect you[2]."

A few other examples may be cited from the original evidence provided by the copies of plays in the possession of the Lord Chamberlain[3]. First may be taken a *Jack Sheppard* (1839) sent in from the Theatre Royal at Hull. Here two sentences were cut out which read:

Jack. Oh God! In thy Mercy either restore my mother or destroy the Son!
Mrs Sheppard. I will not pray for my poor Jack's soul! I know it is wicked to do it.

Two years later the same licenser (Kemble) ordered the omission from *Sixteen String Jack* (Olym. 1841) of the following fragment of conversation:

Mary. Is Life the price of Gold?
Jack. So says the Law.
Mary. But not *his* Law.

Even French plays suffered heavily. In 1840 a *Clémence* was denuded of a sentence spoken by Duvernay:

Et si l' on rend compte un jour de toutes les péchés inutiles, notre époque aura terriblement à faire.

Sometimes, too, the wrath of the licenser and of the Lord

[1] On Larpent's methods see also T. J. Dibdin's *Reminiscences* (1827), ii. 25.
[2] W. Jerrold, *Douglas Jerrold* (1918), i. 193–4.
[3] See Appendix B.

Chamberlain rose to a higher pitch. In 1844 some of the "saloons" submitted three plays, *The Murder House*, *The Thieves' House* and *George Barrington; or, The Life of a Pickpocket*. The Lord Chamberlain was out of town, so Kemble sent on the dramas to him with an accompanying note. The reply came back within a few days, with the heavy intimation that the plays were to be rejected and that the erring managers should come to answer for their sins at the official headquarters. The Lord Chamberlain confesses he is "astonished at the *audacity* of the Managers of the Britannia and Albert Saloons in soliciting a Licence for *such* Pieces[1]."

It is clear, of course, that the licenser's injunctions were not always attended to in the theatres, whatever nominal submission was made as regards the text. Fitzball has a record of a visit paid by Colman to a performance of the popular drama, *The Pilot*:

> Cooke, who never failed of making an excellent point of "No, if I do I'm d——d," on coming to the proscribed line in question, and suddenly perceiving the Licenser in the boxes, proceeded, "No, if I do I'm ——" and placing his thumb with great ludicrous quaintness on his nose, stopped short, with a look so comic, that the immortal George laughed heartily himself, at a manœuvre, which told better than words, how, on other occasions, the critic's professional morality had been attended to[2].

This registers one method of escape open to the players; the presence of the minor theatres provided another for the dramatists. Thus a licence was denied to Bunn's *The Minister and the Mercer* (D.L. 1834) until the author quietly but firmly pointed out that, should the denial be final, his play, perhaps with the inclusion of a few songs, would be performed as a burletta[3] at the lesser theatres and would achieve there special popularity because of the action of the licenser[4]. Such devices, however, were obviously not entirely sufficient to set the stage free, and ample evidence has been given to make us realise, first, the intense pruriency which was deemed

[1] Letters in the Lord Chamberlain's Department, St James's Palace.
[2] Edward Fitzball, *Thirty-Five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life* (1859), i. 161.
[3] On this term see pp. 137–40.
[4] Introduction to the play.

necessary by those holding office, and, secondly, the confusion which was bound to arise from the conflict between the extraordinary strictness of the licensers and the practice in the playhouses themselves.

This moral sensibility in the audience—for the licenser may have been stricter than the average spectator, but did not move in any very original direction—itself peculiar because of the vulgarity of ordinary playhouse life, was coupled with a tasteless following of fashion. The "bucks" of the Regency period were nothing if not stupid, and even the vaunted learning and critical taste of contemporary bluestockings led to little beyond the affected worshipping of popular idols. The two groups, so excellently depicted in Scott's *St Ronan's Well*, were equally dull, and in the theatre Sir Bingo Binks and Lady Penelope roared or simpered along the lines taken by the mob that was society. The domination of fashion is to be seen nowhere more clearly marked than in the notorious Betty furore. This youth, William Henry West Betty, appeared on Dec. 1, 1804, in London, at the age of thirteen, achieving for two years a popularity which cast even Mrs Siddons and her brother into the shade. Everyone crowded to see the "Young" or the "Infant Roscius" so that "he drew all public attention from the real actors of the time, and was alone the magnet of both the London theatres, and the theme of the writers whose principal attention is turned to the stage[1]." The craze, as stated, lasted for two years. Thereafter although "some twenty or thirty *young wonders*, or *infant prodigies*, under the title of Infant Billington, seven years old Roscius and Billington, Infant Columbine, Ormskirk Roscius, Young Orpheus, Infant Vestris, Infant Clown, Comic Roscius, Infant Degville, Infant Hercules, and Infant Candlesnuffer[2]," were followed for a time by those

[1] W. Dunlap, *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke* (1813), i. 276. Pamphlets and books in scores appeared on Betty during 1804 and 1805. In particular should be noted G. D. Harley, *An Authentic Biographical Sketch of the Life, Education, and Personal Character, of William Henry West Betty, the Celebrated Young Roscius* (1804), T. Harral, *The Infant Roscius* (1805), *The Life of Wm. Henry West Betty* (1804), and *The Young Rosciad.... By Peter Pangloss, Esq., LL.D. and A.S.S.* (1805).

[2] W. Dunlap, *op. cit.* i. 281.

who had not realised that fashion had swept on to some other fancy, the infant frenzy died away. Perhaps the most amusing account of one of these Infant Phenomenons—which incidentally shows how fashion, having blinded its eyes to the follies of Betty, had awakened to comparative sanity—appears in *The Percy Anecdotes* (1822)[1]:

The success of Master Betty, if it did not raise juvenile emulation, at least excited the cupidity of parents, and a host of nursling Richards, and pigmy Macbeths, were preparing to feed the public rage for infant actors, when the mania received a fatal check.

In November, 1805, a Miss Mudie, called "The Theatrical Phenomenon," a child apparently about eight years of age, but with a figure remarkably diminutive, even for her years, who had, in the preceding season, played the first rate comic characters at Birmingham, Liverpool, Dublin, and other theatres, made her debut at Covent Garden, as Miss Peggy, in the "Country Girl." She repeated the words correctly, and her performance, as an infant, was surprising; but as an infant, the illusion was completely lost....When Miss Peggy came to be talked of as a *wife*, as a *mistress*, as an object of love and jealousy, the scene became so ridiculous, that loud hissing and laughing ensued. The little child was also contrasted with the fine person of Miss Brunton, now Countess of Craven, who, in the character of Alithea, wore a plume of three upright ostrich feathers on her head, constituting altogether a figure of nearly seven feet high. When Peggy was with her guardian, Mr Murray, who was not very tall, he was obliged to stoop to lay his hand on her head; to bend himself double to kiss her; and where she had to lay hold of his neckcloth to coax and pat his cheek, he was obliged to go almost on all fours. In the third act, Miss Peggy is seen walking in the Park, dressed in boy's clothes, when, instead of appearing a young man who ought to be "shown the town," she looked shorter than before, and even too little to be safely put into jacket and trowsers. Yet Mr Brunton, as her lover Belville, pursues her, and is transported to find her under this disguise, while Mr Murray, her pretended husband, is thrown into an agony of despair, at the idea of another man taking her by the hand.

The absurdity was too great to be endured; and there was a burst of censure from all parts of the house....A loud cry for the manager succeeded, when the first tragedian of his day, Mr Kemble, appeared to supplicate that the child might be allowed

[1] pp. 156–8.

to finish the play; the audience, however, were inexorable; the part of Miss Peggy was transferred to a young lady, whose age corresponded with the character, and Miss Mudie was withdrawn.

The audience perhaps acted rightly in this instance, but it is important to observe that it had been the rapturous adoration of Betty on the part of this very same audience which induced Kemble to put Miss Mudie on the stage. Had not even the veteran Home declared that he had never seen Norval more perfectly acted than when the boy of thirteen took that part? Maturer judgment, no doubt, reversed this decision; Betty was no different, was no more talented than the others—he had only the good fortune to be one of the first and so to catch the rising tide of fashionable enthusiasm.

Nor was the Betty craze the only one which indicated the contemporary power of fashion. Italian opera, which had always been a society diversion since first it was introduced in the days of *The Spectator*, still, with ebbing and flowing, sang its syren-songs to those who would be thought polite. French plays, too, came in for their share of popularity, and private theatricals, already a craze in the late eighteenth century[1], attracted youthful Pizarros and coquettish Juliets[2]. With one attraction after another the regular theatres had to fight, combating dulness and insipidity, vulgar sentiment and hypocritical morals, fashionable fancy and tastes, rude, petty and insincere.

III. *The Theatre*

Somewhat of the same confusion which is manifested among audiences and governing officials is indicated by a study of the actual playhouse conditions of the time. There is, first of all, the general struggle between the major and the minor playhouses. Until 1843 Drury Lane and Covent Garden retained their patent rights, although a stricter

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 19–22.

[2] On this subject there is an interesting set of correspondence (relating to the New Theatre in Tottenham-street) in *The Theatrical Repertory; or, Weekly Rosciad*, No. xxvi, Monday, March 15, to Monday, March 29, 1802.

examination of their claims showed that those rights were indeed based but on flimsy authority. Mere rights, however, do not always bring prosperity. The history of these two houses in the early nineteenth century is one long tale of vicissitudes. Committees of *dilettanti*, including among their number no less a person than Lord Byron, are succeeded by actor-managers; actor-managers are followed by adventurers like Bunn—and always the tale is one of disaster and despair. Frantic efforts are made to make ends meet. Prices are lowered to 4*s*., 2*s*. and 1*s*. during the Osbaldistone management of Covent Garden; at another time the two great theatres are run under one government, with the same troupe of players, so that actors and actresses may be seen on dark nights scurrying from one house to the other, playing a part in the opening piece at Drury Lane and performing again in the concluding farce at Covent Garden. All these efforts fail, and by 1850 Drury Lane is in a serious way, while Covent Garden has entirely abandoned the spoken drama and is turned into an opera-house.

The reason of this failure is to be traced partly to the presence of many other theatres in the metropolis, but also partly at least to bad management and bad architecture. Hazlitt confesses that the gods cannot hear at the two patent theatres, and the complaint, which had already been uttered in the earlier period[1], was echoed again and again in this age.

> "I think," says Syntax, looking round,
> "It is not good, this vast profound:
> I see no well-wrought columns here!
> No attic ornaments appear;
> Nought but a washy wanton waste
> Of gaudy tints and puny taste:
> Too large to hear—too long to see—
> Full of unmeaning symmetry![2]"

Other more serious critics uttered the same complaint; it was agreed by all that a spectator in the further parts of the house "cannot see the countenances of the performers without the

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 22–4.
[2] W. Combe, *Doctor Syntax's Three Tours* (1808), p. 92.

aid of a pocket telescope, he cannot hear any thing except the ranted speeches[1]." It is certainly true that Reynolds thought that audiences really preferred theatres of a large size[2], and that Macready professed the same opinion when before the Select Committee of 1832[3], but such views, it would seem, were exceptional or misguided. Sir Walter Scott seems to have been in the right when, speaking at the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund Dinner in 1827 and referring to the project for a new playhouse in that city, he expressed the hope that "wherever the new theatre is built...it will not be large," that "it should be one in which we can hear our old friends with comfort." "It is better," he added, "that a moderate-sized house should be crowded now and then, than to have a large theatre with benches continually empty[4]." The evils of the large theatre are patent enough now; they were rendered trebly worse in a time when lighting was not so brilliant and when endless alterations had ruined the acoustic properties of the houses.

Still, the large theatres were a tradition and had to be used. They were the homes of "legitimacy" and many actors, after having made names for themselves elsewhere, thought to advance their positions by performing in the "majors." The results may easily be foreseen. When an audience could not see or hear, it was inevitable that actors should coarsen their methods of performance and that managers should indulge in greater and greater spectacular effects. This tendency towards show was, of course, aided by the activities of the minor houses. In the eighteenth century Sadler's Wells and its companions had been the homes of musical and pantomimic entertainment; Astley had made his name through his historic spectacles enacted in an extended circus ring; and it was natural that this tradition should be continued in an epoch when the minor theatres rose to a position of still

[1] F. G. Tomlins, *A Brief View of the English Drama, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time: with Suggestions for elevating the present Condition of the Art, and of its Professors* (1840), p. 73.

[2] *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds* (1827), ii. 378.

[3] On this subject see E. B. Watson, *op. cit.* p. 138.

[4] *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1827.

greater glory and importance. Fitzball tells of the way in which the better authors and the better scene painters, including Stanfield himself, brought the minor playhouses "to a pitch of grandeur and excellence, little or never anticipated by old stagers."

> The theatres, in their interior, became so magnificent as to elicit both wonder and astonishment; the Surrey Theatre being, at one time, decorated with gold and velvet, a Genoa velvet curtain covering the stage. The Coburg...decorated with one sunny glitter of gold braided mirrors, with a superb looking-glass curtain, which drew up and let down in the sight of the audience, and reflected every form and face in that gorgeous house[1].

Show and spectacle, then, were the order of the day at both camps. Fitzball's own drama of *The Flying Dutchman* (Adel. 1827) was, according to its author, "not by any means behind even Frankenstein, or Der Freischütz itself in horrors and blue fire[2]." Such sights delighted

> In this hobgoblin'd and be-spectre'd age,
> Where all that's wond'rous occupies the stage:
> Where oceans foam without a single wave,
> And colour'd beards enchant that never shave...
> Where living objects, too, supply our wants,
> Cows, camels, steeds, pigs, apes, and elephants![3]

The "living objects" were both plentifully introduced and plentifully satirised in the period. Reynolds' *The Caravan* (D.L. 1803) brought success to Drury Lane at a moment of impending disaster, not by reason of its characters or its wit, but because a real dog, Carlos, after a good deal of coaxing, was persuaded nightly to rescue a heroine from a tank of water. Fitzball introduced into *Paul Clifford* (C.G. 1835) "a stage coach, and six *real* horses, determined to have a *run* of some kind[4]." During the rehearsals of *Thalaba the Destroyer* (C.G. 1836) Osbaldistone, the manager, told the author that he

> had *luckily*...engaged *superior* strength....He told me, with a gust of satisfaction, that he had engaged the Burmah bulls,

[1] E. Fitzball, *op. cit.* i. v–vi.
[2] *Op. cit.* i. 169.
[3] T. J. Dibdin's *Of Age To-morrow* (D.L. 1800), Prologue.
[4] *Op. cit.* ii. 24.

elephants, ostriches, I think, and heaven knows what besides, from the Surrey Zoological Gardens[1].

Nor were these by any means uncommon. It is certainly at no rare intervals that we run across notices such as the following in the daily and monthly press:

> An oriental spectacle, entitled, *Hyder Ali, or the Lions of Mysore*, was this evening produced, in which the principal actors were the inhabitants of the menagerie at Paris[2].

All efforts were made to secure novelty. Mazurier, a French pantomimic actor, had made a hit in *Jocko, ou le Singe de Brézil*, and was engaged by Kemble for Covent Garden, where, in *Jocko, or, The Brazilian Monkey* (C.G. 1825), he won such unmeasured applause that Planché could make Success, the heroine of his "revue," *Success* (Adel. 1825), declare that "A monkey...is the man for me!"—

> There's fifty young men have told me their fine tales,
> And called me their fairest she;
> But of all the gay fellows that sport on the green,
> Young Jocko's the lad for me.
> He tumbles and capers, and climbs up a tree;
> He scratches himself with his toes;
> He looks to a monkey as like as can be,
> When he puts on his pasteboard nose!

Satire of the introduction of such attractions was, apparently, indulged in also by Colman in his *Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh* (H.[2] 1811), based on Canning's *The Rovers*. Quite naturally, under these conditions, the playwright became of less importance than the machinist. Moncrieff in the Advertisement to his *Zoroaster* (D.L. 1824) explains that

> the necessity of transposing, curtailing, and lengthening many Scenes of this Piece, to suit the capabilities of carpenters and scene-shifters, nearly wholly deprived it of any pretensions to Dramatic construction it might originally have possessed.

[1] *Op. cit.* ii. 81–2.
[2] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1831, regarding a production at Drury Lane on Oct. 17, 1831.

We can understand for what audiences went to this play when we read a stage direction in the first act:

> The back part of the Scene disappears, and discovers
>
> THE
> ΕΙΔΟΦΥΣΙΚΟΝ,
> or,
> Καλοσκηνητεκνηφυσικινεων
>
> [which includes] The Great Desert by Twilight; A Caravan of Merchants; The Pyramids; The Great Temple of Apollinopolis Magna; The Colossus of Rhodes; Mount Vesuvius by Moonlight; The Grand Falls of Tivoli; The City of Babylon; The Destruction of Babylon——

the directions and description occupy four closely printed pages. Few there were who could repeat Dimond's declaration:

> No scenic shew he boasts to bribe the eye;
> No dance, procession, elephant and car,
> No ghost, no dungeon, no alarms of war[1].

Dimond, and a few others, such as the author of *My Uncle Gabriel* (D.L. 1824), who would not indulge in the aid of "*a matchless stud of horses, splendid scenery*" or "*costly dresses*," might endeavour "to return to those golden days, when a good Tragedy or Comedy, followed by a lively Farce, used to gratify the Patrons of the Drama[2]." Even Shakespeare had to bow to the prevailing mood and spirit of the time. Bunn, in his work *The Stage: Both before and behind the Curtain* (1840), comments on the attractiveness of Stanfield's "Pictorial Illustrations" to *Henry V*[3]. In *The Tempest* Macready had an Ariel who

> floated in air across the stage, singing or mocking as she floated—while a chorus of spirits winged after her higher in the air. Now amidst the terrors of the storm she *flamed amazement*; now with the gentle descent of a protecting god she hung over the slumbers of Gonzalo....The masque is given as Shakespeare wrote it, with beautiful landscapes, brown and blue, such as Titian would have beheld with pleasure[4].

[1] *The Sea-Side Story* (C.G. 1801), Prologue.
[2] Address to the reader.
[3] iii. 102–3.
[4] Quotation from *The Examiner* in W. Archer, *W. C. Macready*, p. 119.

There were adverse critics, of course, some blaming the public, some the managers. In his Advertisement to *The Antiquary* (C.G. 1820) Daniel Terry is quite frank about the matter, confessing that

> how materially the Artist and Machinist contributed to the support of this piece, is manifest by the applause bestowed upon Scenery, justly entitled to the highest praise for appropriate beauty of design and uncommon excellence of execution.

If the public thus applauded scenic effects, the rhetorical question in *The Covent Garden Journal*[1] does not seem to be justified. "Who," asks the author, "who called upon [the managers] to produce their Pizarros, their Blue-Beards, their Sleeping Beauties, and Cinderellas?" The answer, I fear, must be—the British Public.

The chief charge against the managers is on the score of rivalry. Rivalry arises usually in an endeavour to secure an audience, but even in Garrick's time there had been a not very dignified struggle over *Romeo and Juliet* which left the spectators disgusted[2]. In this half-century the struggles were continuous and bitter. "Rivalry," says *The Theatrical Repertory*[3], "has already commenced at the two theatres... Braham and Storace, are to play at Covent Garden, against Mrs Billington, the nights she performs at Drury Lane, and it is reported Madame Mara, is to stand forward at Drury-lane, when Mrs B. appears at the other house." "According to the courteous custom which has prevailed time out of mind in English theatricals," Planché tells us,

> an Easter piece on the subject of "Oberon" had been rushed out at Drury Lane in anticipation of Weber's opera, and, in addition to this, Bishop was engaged to write an opera to be produced in opposition to it, the libretto by George Soane being founded on the popular story of "Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp[4]."

Some older writers looked back upon a—perhaps not very accurate—vision of past times. "We then had a stage,"

[1] i. 28.
[2] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 45.
[3] No. 11. S. 26/9/1801.
[4] J. R. Planché, *Recollections* (1872), i. 86. On this question of rivalry see T. J. Dibdin, *Reminiscences* (1827), ii. 208–11.

thought Fitzball[1], "now we have not. The reason is obvious—there were then certain people for certain things, and certain theatres for certain performances: everyone had a chance. Now they seem always on the look-out to snap up each other's ideas, to eat up each other's thoughts." Chapter IV of Bunn's third volume of *The Stage* is headed "War, war, no peace," and under Dec. 3, 1838, he notes that his production of *William Tell* "was attempted to be forestalled and injured by another of those disgraceful efforts which had been made the preceding season at Covent Garden Theatre, in the instance of *Joan of Arc*[2]." The public, or at least a certain part of the public—perhaps not uninfluenced by pecuniary associations—banded themselves into parties, so that there were Drury Lane and Covent Garden "party-men," and ordinary members of an audience on first nights might hear the cries of "Turn out those noisy fellows from Drury Lane" and *vice versa*[3]. Sometimes the rivalry failed, as when *The Love Charm*, which had been hurriedly rushed to performance in order to forestall *Fra Diavolo* at Covent Garden, was damned, but, successful or not, the "absurd and illiberal opposition" persisted. Obviously it is necessary to take this wide-spread rivalry into account both when we are studying the repertoires of the various houses and when we are occupied with the spectacular tendencies in the theatres of the time.

From the earlier stage the nineteenth century adopted a certain limited number of conventions, but many of these, as decades passed by, were ignored or were supplanted by others. The ancient practice of giving out a play endured till the close of the half-century. "The drama was announced by Mr C. Kemble for repetition with applause[4]," is a typical record of the time, and the persistence of the custom gives point to a criticism on one of Fitzball's early dramas, that he had

displayed a precosity of tact by leaving one person living at

[1] *Op. cit.* i. 85–6.
[2] *Op. cit.* iii. 111.
[3] R. B. Peake, *op. cit.* ii. 363.
[4] *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829), p. 19.

the end of [his] tragedies, to give out the play for the ensuing night[1].

So, too, died slowly the convention of the prologue. In 1842 Robert Bell, trying to imitate an older style in his comedy of *Marriage* (H.[2] 1842), tacked on to it a prologue, but its wording shows clearly that it was an unusual performance:

> The good old custom of an elder day,
> When Prologue raised the curtain to the play,
> And sprightly Epilogue came tittering after,
> To draw it down again with roars of laughter,
> Has been abandoned in this railroad age,
> That you might steam more quickly o'er the stage.

Nearly two decades before Bell's time, George Croly had voted the prologue

> a horrid great bore
> Half a puff for the House, half a rant for the Nation;
> In short,—'tis—a *Prologue*. A grand Botheration![2]

There is some question, it seems, concerning the dramatist to whom we should give the credit for first boldly daring a pit with an unprologued play. Saxe Wyndham in his records of Covent Garden[3] gives the palm to Miss Mitford, instancing her *Julian* (C.G. 1823), yet Planché, who, conceited as he was, did not often bear borrowed feathers, distinctly states that the first drama to abandon the practice was his own *A Woman never Vext* (C.G. 1824), adding some apparently realistic details concerning the episode:

> At one of the last rehearsals Fawcett asked me if I had written a prologue. "No." "A five-act play, and no prologue!—they'll tear up the benches!" They did nothing of the sort. The play... was a great success, and the custom for prologues to
>
> "—Precede the piece in mournful verse,
> As undertakers strut before the hearse,"
>
> was broken through for the first time, without the slightest notice being taken of it by the public[4].

[1] E. Fitzball, *op. cit.* i. 59. On this now vanished convention see Clement Scott, *The Drama of Yesterday and Today* (1899), i. 72. The practice is still in being among the recently revived "tent theatres" of the American Middle West.

[2] *Pride shall have a Fall* (C.G. 1824), Prologue. Already in 1804 we find this tendency; in that year Holt introduced a "Prelude" instead of a prologue in his *The Land We Live In* (D.L. 1804).

[3] ii. 24.

[4] *Recollections* (1872), i. 63.

The probability is that the credit must be shared by a number of daring spirits and that there was a general feeling about the middle of this period that the prologue and the epilogue had run their day.

The same conflict between traditionalism and the spirit of a new age is to be seen in the attitude of the period towards the proscenium doors. An attempt to remove them was made on the rebuilding of Drury Lane at the close of the first decade, but actors' prejudices demanded their return. By 1822, however, they had gone once more, and Colman's address written for the reopening of the theatre draws attention to the innovation:

> Nor blame him [the manager] for transporting from his floors
> Those old offenders here—the two stage doors—
> Doors which have, oft', with burnish'd panels stood,
> And golden knockers, glitt'ring in a wood;
> Which on their posts, through every change remained,
> Fast as Bray's Vicar, whosoever reign'd;
> That served for Palace, Cottage, Street, or Hall—
> Used for each place, and out of place in all;
> Station'd, like watchmen, who in lamp-light sit,
> For all the business of the night unfit[1].

Gradually the apron crept back. Still we may get the old-fashioned stage directions:

> *Mrs* HAMILTON, *discovered sitting in a musing posture, after a pause, rises and comes forward*[2]—

yet the action of dramas was slowly but surely moving behind the proscenium pillars. The age of the picture-frame stage has come.

The question of the actual scenic effects in these theatres is a large one, and one concerning which there is much more information to be gathered than that which may be brought together to illustrate the eighteenth century stage. No detailed analyses can be entered into here; for those reference must be made to other volumes; but an attempt may be

[1] *The Theatrical Observer* of Oct. 16, 1822, draws attention to the fact that, with the removal of the doors, the actors were more blended with the scenery than they had been in earlier times.

[2] Marianne Chambers' *The School for Friends* (D.L. 1805), II. (i).

made to indicate at least a few of the more peculiar and influential of the movements of the time[1]. The age teems with great scene painters, who, be it observed, by no means confined their activities to Drury Lane and to Covent Garden alone. The great Stanfield worked for the minor theatres, as did the Grieves. Roberts, Charles Marshall, Tomkins, Wilson ably supported their still more talented colleagues, achieving what must often have been real beauty, and devising new methods of securing their effects. It must not, of course, be imagined that the results were always fine. In the early years of the period they were often exceedingly clumsy and even by 1850 no sort of perfection had been attained. As an illustration, two or three excerpts may be made from *The Theatrical Repertory*:

We could not help smiling on observing that the scene on the Sierra de Ronda presented nothing but barren rocks, without a tree or shrub, although Sadi says, "there are eatables on every bush"; and the front of the Goatherd's cottage, instead of the residence of humble poverty, wore the semblance of the stone front of a superb monastery, with the figure of St Dominick in a niche over the door...[2].

New scenery; though by the by, the latter article is often *vox et preterea nihil*, for although it be a standing line at the bottom of the Advertisement of almost every new production, he must have keen eyes who can discover, except in a pantomime, above two scenes out of twenty, that have not slept in the scene-room, or become familiar to the sight, for several years past...[3].

Even the Scene-shifters seem ashamed of the cause which calls forth their exertion.... The wings representing woods, are pushed on to the flat of a chambre, and so *vice versa*...[4].

Some illuminated boats are introduced at the close of the Opera, which came down the stage. We could not but smile at the invention—they display astonishing mechanical powers—The painted canvases intended to represent the waves, have the

[1] G. C. D. Odell in his *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* has sections on the staging of this period, and something is said of it in my *Development of the Theatre* (1927). Contemporary accounts are innumerable; among them might be mentioned G. Scharf, *Scenic Effects at Covent Garden* (1838).

[2] No. VIII. S. 7/11/1801, regarding *The Mountaineers* at Drury Lane.

[3] No. XXII. M. 15/2/1802.

[4] No. XXIII. M. 22/2/1802, regarding *The Pirates* at Drury Lane.

appearance of the bottom part of double doors left on their hinges, which very conveniently open for the boats to pass[1].

Leigh Hunt found the same weaknesses in contemporary settings, and noted

> The alteration of scene, so badly managed at the theatre, where you see two men running violently towards each other, with half a castle or a garden in their grasp[2].

These notes may serve to indicate the failures of the time. The words of Leigh Hunt and of the editor of *The Theatrical Repertory* are amply supported by other contemporary evidence, for audiences were growing more critical now, and were less inclined to let pass those many inconsistencies which had seemed but natural to their forefathers. If theatrical managements did not keep abreast of the popular demand, that simply indicated, first, the gradual growth of this desire for consistency and for realism, and, secondly, the impoverishment of the playhouses which could not at once bring the new methods full-formed into operation. The ways of the early producers are well indicated by the manuscript notes, evidently from the hand of a prompter, in the Harvard Library copy of Pocock's *Woodstock* (C.G. 1826), and these notes form a fitting commentary upon the critical passages quoted above. In the second scene of the first act of this play we discover a demand for "Madge Wildfires Cot—Hovel Wings 3[d] Gr[s] [3]." After a "Library" with "Gothic Wings" and an "Antique Chamber" with similar wings, we get "Magpie Cottage," which, I suggest, is simply the stock setting taken from the chief scene of Pocock's *The Magpie, or the Maid*, originally produced at Covent Garden in 1815 but retained for years in the regular repertory. Indication of the same practice is provided in the peculiar printed list of "Scenery and Properties" given at the beginning of Peake's *The Three Wives of Madrid* (Lyc. 1844). These obviously come from the prompter, and for their interest some at least may be quoted here. The first scene in act I is described in the

[1] No. XXIII. M. 22/2/1802, regarding *The Cabinet* at Covent Garden.
[2] *Critical Essays* (1807), p. 22.
[3] "Gr[s]" obviously stands for "Grooves."

text as "*A beautiful Public Garden*"; in the list it is given as "Telbin's Garden in the Panorama Groove. Fountain in front. Basin in front of fountain." Evidently, as in days gone by, special flats came to be known by the names of their artists, and Telbin is immortalised here as Harvey was in an eighteenth century inventory[1]. "*A Chamber in the House of* GELOSO" in the second scene is marked as "Yeoman's Daughter, chamber 1st groove"; in other words the chamber scene from one of the *Yeoman's Daughter* plays is set immediately behind the proscenium pillars. Perhaps the "*Exterior of the villa of Diego de Morales*" (scene iii) was specially painted, for its description is more detailed: "Stone house and wing to join wing 2nd; wing groove. House oblique to join do. Window piece in 3rd flat grooves. Mill landscape in panorama groove." The next scene, however, introduces us to an old friend. In the text the locality indicated is "*A chamber in the house of* NICHOLAS. *Table, &c.*," but the prompter carries us off to Eastcheap with his "Boar's head, flats, 1st grooves." In the second scene of act II the "*Room in the House of* GELOSO" is once more the "Yeoman's Daughter" but with the "chamber removed to the 3rd groove," while the final picture, which should be "*A Cemetry belonging to* ISIDORE'S *Monastery*," is simply the "Last scene of Romeo and Juliet, tomb, &c."

In spite of the repetitional use of stock flats and wings, however, and in spite of a certain clumsiness of effect, this age theatrically was an age of innovation. The introduction of gas meant that new devices could be employed undreamt of before. Candles, it is true, along with the ever-faithful lamps, continued at the Haymarket till 1843[2], while at Covent Garden and Drury Lane there were still qualms about the use of gas at the end of the second decade of the period[3]. At first the experiment was tried only in the auditorium[4],

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 31.

[2] See a bill of Friday, March 28, 1843, quoted in Clement Scott, *op. cit.* i. 5.

[3] On this subject see G. C. D. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (1921), ii. 157, and E. B. Watson, *op. cit.* pp. 92–5.

[4] At the Olympic in 1815.

and then, later, the new form of lighting was carried to the stage[1]. Complaints were made regarding the danger, the odour and the colour of this illuminant, but, once managers realised the ease with which the gas-taps could be manipulated, there was opened up the possibility of great scenic advance; gas had come to remain until its later rival, electricity, disestablished it in our own times. It must not be thought, of course, that the introduction of gas in itself led to any very great changes. Ample contemporary evidence is available to show that, for the greater part of this period, the auditorium remained fully illuminated during the performance of a play, and that a fierce glare of light ascended from the footlights to make deep upward shadows on the countenances of the performers. On the other hand, gas is a more manageable illuminant than either candles or lamps, and we must presume at least a certain progressive development in the art of theatre lighting. Perhaps too much may be made of those who, critical by nature, saw fit to animadvert against the ways of the producers.

In other respects, at least, the early nineteenth century proved itself ambitious and experimental. Scenic devices which had already been tried tentatively in the preceding age were now brought to perfection. Thus the use of gauze, known to Loutherbourg and his successors, appears more frequently than before for the purpose of securing pleasant effects. In Planché's *Telemachus* (Olym. 1834), Calypso

waves her sceptre—Music—A gauze to imitate smoke covers the stage...music—Gauze rises and discovers the figure of ULYSSES *leaning on a pedestal.*

Similarly in a pantomime performed at Covent Garden Prince Pückler-Muskau describes "a thick mist" covering the stage "and gradually rolling off." "This," he says, "is remarkably well managed by means of fine gauze[2]." "Practicable Mountains" is the heading to the ninth scene of Cross's

[1] Drury Lane introduced auditorium and stage lighting by gas in 1817.

[2] *A Tour in England of a German Prince* (1832), iii. Letter 7.

Rinaldo Rinaldini (R.C. 1801), and we know from prints and from other stage directions that Loutherbourg's innovations in this way were eagerly followed by many scenic artists[1]. The age, however, had passed far beyond Loutherbourg; its panoramic and interior effects could never have been dreamt of in the preceding century. The old Eidophusikon, it is true, still continued its career[2], but it was outdone by other and more startling devices. The panoramic effects were specially popular. In September 1823 Daguerre and Bouton first exhibited their diorama in Regent's Park, the device being patented the following year in the name of J. Arrowsmith[3]. Apparently the diorama presented in a kind of optical illusion a series of pictures which were moved either on separate canvases or on the roller system. The lighting employed was borrowed from the Eidophusikon. Both in its elaborated form and in the simpler panorama system the diorama was used freely in the theatres. Thus a stage direction from Planché's *Paris and London* (Adel. 1828) describes the scene as the

> Deck of the Steamer—Moving Panoramic View from Calais to Dover, by various Painted Flats to the Scene[4].

We can almost hear the rollers creaking and look into the rapt eyes of the spectators.

This burletta of Planché's furnishes us with another interesting description. The fifth scene of act I is

> *A Diagonal View of the Stage of the Odeon...seen through the wings—the proscenium boxes, L.—at the end of the float a section of the audience and part of the theatre is visible...the sham curtain falls, amidst applause from behind, and the characters advance through the wings to the front of the real stage.*

This, truly, is a modern effect, but even its revolutionary tendencies are outshadowed by the setting of Fitzball's *Jonathan Bradford* (Surrey, 1833), where the interiors of four rooms were placed upon the stage at one time[5]. It is said

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 29.
[2] See *id.* p. 27. *Supra*, p. 27, and G. C. D. Odell, *op. cit.* ii. 164–5.
[3] Patent No. 4899.
[4] II. iv.
[5] See E. Fitzball, *op. cit.* i. 238–40.

that Fitzball had been anticipated by Colman, who had shown two rooms simultaneously in *The Actor of All Work* (H.[2] 1817)[1]; he was certainly followed by Edward Stirling, in whose *Above and Below* (Lyc. 1846) two floors were presented on the stage. Whoever was responsible for its introduction, we realise that we are well on the way to modern times. The setting of Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* is at least a century old. It will be noticed that both Fitzball and Planché worked largely for the minor theatres, and it is once more at a minor—Astley's Royal Amphitheatre —that we find another interesting innovation. When that house reopened on Monday, March 23, 1818, after "improvements," it displayed "a contracted and progressive extension of the New Proscenium, which with the stage doors will move and remove in sight of the audience[2]." Here, instead of O'Neill, we are reminded of Germany and Reinhardt.

One might continue enumerating the various stage inventions of the period, drawing attention to device after device which, like Fitzball's "vampire-trap[3]," have continued as stock machines, but such innovation in regard to stage appurtenances is really of less importance than the gradually altering tendency in the sphere of scenic design. Already in the late eighteenth century there had been movements towards realism of setting and towards a certain historical accuracy[4]; but these movements up to 1800 had been but feebly tentative. It is clear that this period opened with a scenic art which was largely conventional and largely inconsistent. Such devices as the diorama, however, were teaching men the art of the realistic setting, so far at least as landscape was concerned, and Capon continued his archæo-

[1] It seems also that two cells with a partition appeared in Lewis' *Venoni* at Drury Lane in 1808.

[2] Note from the playbill.

[3] The "vampire-trap" was a two-leaved trap, with springs, constructed either on the stage floor or in the flats. It permitted a supernatural figure to disappear more rapidly than the older traps had allowed, the springs drawing the two leaves of the trap-door close once more and so concealing the aperture.

[4] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 29–30, and *The Development of the Theatre* (1927), pp. 174–6.

logical researches, translating these to terms of the stage. Slowly, but surely, the older conventionality began to disappear; its place came to be occupied by spectacular, historically "accurate," settings for tragedies placed in the past and by "realistic" interiors for modern comedies. The full development of these tendencies does not, of course, arrive until the Shakespearian productions of Charles Kean and the comedies of Robertson in the fifties and sixties of the century, but a great deal had already been accomplished even before 1850. Planché was interested in more than costume; he sought at once to give distinction, accuracy and realistic effect to the scenes of his later plays, and his efforts began to be copied by other theatrical workers of the time. "A beautifully painted plafond...lighted by an immense skylight" is distinctly mentioned by *The Theatrical Observer*[1] in referring to the Drury Lane production of Bunn's *The Minister and the Mercer* (D.L. 1834), showing that the full box-set, with ceiling complete, had been evolved by 1834. This was a "royal" apartment, but a similar movement is to be traced also in the setting for humbler interiors. Mathews and Vestris, who had been originally responsible for many of the changes in scenery and costume, evidently caused a stir when in 1841 they produced Boucicault's *London Assurance* (C.G. 1841) at Covent Garden, using there "not stage properties, but *bona fide* realities[2]." The domestic melodrama, too, must be held responsible for a further change of tone, scenes such as those presented in Buckstone's *Luke the Labourer* (Adel. 1826) calling for a very different setting than had been accorded to the "genteel" comedies of the eighteenth century. In every way we see an approach towards modern ideas and modern conventions. It is in this period that the detailed "accuracy" of later producers found, if not its birth, at least its boyhood. J. P. Kemble, with his passion for Shakespeare, endeavoured to set and dress the plays more carefully than had ever been done before. We need not stop to argue that Kemble's "accuracy" was often exceedingly inaccurate; the important point is

[1] Feb. 10, 1834. [2] *Id.* March 5, 1841.

that his aim was in the direction of later effort. In achievement he may have failed, but the lordly mantle he wore was assumed by all his successors. Macready, perhaps with not such whole-hearted enthusiasm but at least dominated by popular predilections, continued in the same path, and the task was brought to completion in the very midst of the century by Charles Kean, who, almost more of an archæologist than an actor, ransacked every available "authority" for materials on which to work. Even the botany in his scenes was historically correct[1]. Nor must we assume that these endeavours were confined to the major theatres and the better-known managers. Already it has been seen how the tendency towards realism in comedy owed much to the Olympic, and when we read that T. J. Dibdin for the Surrey production of his *Heart of Midlothian* "consulted every well-authenticated accessible authority for the *vrai costume*[2]," we realise how far the new movement had penetrated. A new type of historical accuracy, too, was born, or at least suggested in this period. The eighteenth century had imagined the costuming of a *Henry V* in garments not too far distant from those worn in that monarch's reign; it was left to the following century to imagine the performance of old plays in what at least purported to be the original methods of production. We thus hear of a semi-Grecian rendering of a Sophoclean drama and of the presentation of an Elizabethan play without the usual scenery, curtains being employed to give something of that effect which even this period realised belonged to Shakespeare's theatre. Even at Edinburgh, in 1847, the scene for Garrick's *Catherine and Petruchio* was "laid in the Baron's Hall, fitted up for a temporary theatre as in the days of yore[3]." Not only Irving, but William Poel, was anticipated before 1850. It is impossible in this volume to do more than outline general tendencies, but, from such few facts as have been given, it must be apparent how "modern" were becoming the views of the age. In this

[1] See *The Development of the Theatre*, p. 193.
[2] T. J. Dibdin, *Reminiscences* (1827), ii. 179.
[3] J. C. Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (1888), p. 407.

connection it is interesting to note that it is in this period we first hear of the fourth wall[1]. Speaking of Bannister, Leigh Hunt informs us that

> the stage appears to be his own room, of which the audience compose the fourth wall: if they clap him, he does not stand still to enjoy their applause[2].

Truly are we standing here on the threshold of the twentieth century.

Costume kept steady pace with this scenic art, which aimed, now at spectacle, now at realism, now at historical accuracy. Already in the eighteenth century attempts had been made to clothe the Shakespearian plays in a fitting manner; Macklin and Garrick, aided by such artists as Capon, had set an ideal which all later managers to Irving's time were to follow. For several decades of the nineteenth century, of course, there were serious lapses from perfection. In 1801, at Covent Garden, *Richard III* came upon the stage

> headed with a Grecian casque and plume of feathers, and wearing glaves or gauntlets, with a corselet. The casque had more sense than the property man who invented it, for it was ashamed of its post, and fell off Richard's head in his second scene of the act[3].

Professor Odell chronicles the failures as well as the successes of J. P. Kemble's efforts[4], which, in spite of many inconsistencies, were the first real attempts to secure upon the stage the semblance of historical accuracy. In order to understand aright both the general movement of the time and the results secured, we must turn to J. R. Planché's interesting *Recollections*. "In 1872," he says,

> it may surprise many persons to learn that forty or fifty years ago our greatest painters, poets, and novelists were, as far as regarded a correct idea of the civil and military costume of our ancestors, involved in Cimmerian darkness. To Sir Walter Scott the honour is due of having first attracted public attention to the advantages derivable from the study of such subjects, as a new source of effect as well as of historical illustration[5].

[1] The first reference to this term—as those to many others discussed here—in the *N.E.D.* is very much later than that given here.
[2] *Op. cit.* p. 60. [3] *The Theatrical Repertory*, No. VI. S. 24/10/1801.
[4] *Op. cit.* ii. 98–101. [5] i. 224.

That this statement is fundamentally true we have no reason to doubt; indeed, as will be indicated later, Scott's influence in the direction of "Götzism" upon the theatre of his time cannot be over-exaggerated. The actual achievement, however, both in drama and in scenic art, he left to other men. In 1823, Planché tells us, he had a casual conversation with Kemble respecting a production of *King John*. After Planché had pointed out to the manager the inconsistencies in previous performances of Shakesperian plays,

> Mr Kemble admitted the fact, and perceived the pecuniary advantage that might result from the experiment. It was decided that I should make the necessary researches, design the dresses, and superintend the production of "King John," *gratuitously*, I beg leave to say.... That I was the original cause of this movement [towards historical accuracy] is certain[1].

King John, therefore, produced at Covent Garden on Monday, Jan. 19, 1824, and *Henry IV*, produced on Thursday, May 6 of the same year, were duly billed as being re-dressed, and the advertisements gave ample space to a list of "Authorities for the Costumes." One may note, in Planché's account, the reference to Kemble's recognition of "the pecuniary advantage" to be derived from the innovation. Indeed, the author informs us that

> receipts of from 400*l.* to 600*l.* nightly soon reimbursed the management for the expense of the production[2].

Boldly, H. G. Tomlins in his *A Brief View of the English Stage* (1840) declares that

> "Correctness of costume" was a phrase invented to excuse pageantry, as was "accuracy of locality" for spectacle. 'Hamlet,' 'Lear,' 'Macbeth,' 'Coriolanus,' 'The Tempest,' 'Othello,' 'Henry the Fifth' were now "revived[3]."

Unquestionably, although Planché himself was sincere, the Kembles indulged in the new fashion, partly because it allowed them to rival the spectacles of the minor theatres while still crying their watchword of "Shakespeare and Legitimate Drama," partly because they realised, from the

[1] Planché, *op. cit.* i. 52–7. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 57. [3] *Op. cit.* p. 79.

box-office receipts, that the age as a whole, sharing the general romantic fervour, was full of a desire to see these past ages brought upon the stage realistically. The "conventional dress" of Mrs Siddons, which Planché ridicules, was out of favour. Indeed, in spite of the gorgeous spectacle indulged in by the Kembles, the Keans and the Irvings, we are not far from the efforts of the present day. It is to be observed that Planché himself would have preferred *King John* "or any other play... acted in plain evening dress" rather than performed in the Augustan modes of the past age, and that the close of this period saw the production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, in a modified "Elizabethan" setting, the actors playing against curtains and title-boards[1]. For the moment, however, Shakespeare in modern dress is but a fanciful dream and Elizabethan staging only a peculiar experiment; the period is dominated by the desire for historical accuracy and splendour. Even in a "fairy extravaganza," Planché's *The Invisible Prince* (H.[2] 1846), "the Amazonian Guards of the Princess" have to be "dressed and armed... from accurate drawings of Mexican costumes as published in the magnificent work of Lord Kingston[2]." This is from the close of the period; how realism was used in the service of spectacle in earlier years is not unamusingly illustrated in the bills issued by Sadler's Wells Theatre during April and May 1804 for a show entitled *Ὠκεάνια*, otherwise known as *The Siege of Gibraltar*. This performance, we are told, was

> a grand Naval Spectacle, presenting that memorable monument of British Glory, the Siege of Gibraltar; with an exact representation of the armament both by Land and Sea, of the combined forces of France and Spain, with real Men of War and Floating Batteries, built and rigged by professional men from his Majesty's Dock Yards, and which float in a receptacle containing nearly 8000 cubic feet of real water[2].

Evidently it was considered by the management advisable to emphasise still further the accuracy of the show, for on

[1] See Clement Scott, *op. cit.* i. 74, and *supra*, p. 39.
[2] *Note on the Costumes.*
[3] Bill of Monday, April 2.

May 28 the bills altered their wording for the purpose of drawing attention to the

real ships of 100, 74, and 60 guns, &c. built, rigged, and manœuvred in the most correct manner, as every nautical character who has seen them implicitly allows, which work down with the wind on their starboard beam, wear and haul the wind on their larboard tacks, to regain their situations, never attempted at any Theatre in this or any other country: the ships firing their broadsides, the conflagration of the town in various places, the defence of the garrison, and attack by the floating batteries, is so faithfully and naturally represented, that when the floating batteries take fire, some blowing up with a dreadful explosion, and others, after burning to the water's edge, sink to the bottom; while the gallant Sir Roger Curtis appears in his boat to save the drowning Spaniards, the British tars for that purpose plunging into the water, the effect is such as to produce an unprecedented climax of astonishment and applause.

These two extracts indicate well the theatrical tendencies of the time. Everything must be spectacular, must be correct, must be decorous—for "many persons disliked the appearance" of "naked feet represented (in silk fleshings, of course)" even in a Greek tragedy of *Orestes* at Covent Garden[1]. We are near, yet far, from the twentieth century.

The note regarding this wonderful 'Ωκεάνια[2] has led us somewhat away from the subject of costume, but its obvious insistence on naturalism may serve to emphasise the importance of studying, in the realm of stage dress, that movement which accompanied archæological precision. If this historical accuracy had a considerable influence on tragedy and melodrama, comedy unquestionably was guided and admonished by the simpler naturalistic effects.

Comedy in general has and had nothing to do with costumes of the past, and the gradual adoption of unexaggerated garments *à la mode* had probably as great an influence as had the other in the tragic sphere. Prints and

[1] E. Fitzball, *op. cit.* i. 69.

[2] That the realisation of effect was as fine or as "natural" as the word picture may be questioned. The "receptacle" for water at Sadler's Wells measured 40 feet by 100 feet, and, large as it was, hardly offered much room for a number of men of war, floating batteries and "et ceteras."

written records tell us surely enough that comic persons in plays of the late eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth were characterised not only by oddities of dress but by serious inconsistencies of garment, while in the companion field, that of burlesque, exaggeration was the rule unalterable. Coats of the Georgian period met with pantaloons; rude contrasts were secured by the use of the most blatant colouring; the low comedians clowned it, not only in the delivery of their lines, but in the clothes they assumed. The little sketches by Robert Cruickshank given as frontispieces to some plays of the period were perhaps not overfar from theatrical "nature." Again, the reform instituted in the later years must be credited to J. R. Planché, who, since he is an entertaining witness, may once more be allowed to tell his own tale. It was the production of this writer's *Olympic Revels* (Olym. 1831) which marked out an epoch, and Planché declares that "the extraordinary success" of his play "was due not only to the admirable singing and *piquante* performance" of Vestris, "but also to the charm of novelty imparted to it by the elegance and accuracy of the costumes, it having been previously the practice to dress a burlesque in the most *outré* and ridiculous fashion."

> My suggestion to try the effect of persons picturesquely attired speaking absurd doggerel, fortunately took the fancy of the fair lessee, and the alteration was highly appreciated by the public, but many old actors could never get over their early impressions. Liston thought to the last that Prometheus, instead of the Phrygian cap, tunic, and trousers, should have been dressed like a great lubberly boy, in a red jacket and nankeens, with a pinafore all besmeared with lollipops; others that, as in "Midas," the costume should be an incongruous mixture of the classical and the farcical[1].

Directly, of course, this innovation led towards the further development of historical accuracy, but indirectly it had its influence upon comic dressing. Although Liston and his contemporaries remained unconvinced, younger actors saw that Planché's experiment was a success, and as a result they were willing to put aside their low comedians' over-exag-

[1] *The Extravaganzas of J. R. Planché* (1879), i. 40–1.

gerated costumes in favour of others of a more "naturalistic" kind. Not at once was the reform effected, but within a few decades at least it became customary to habit a comedy in the prevailing garments of the period with no further oddities than might be met with in ordinary life. The effect of this change on drama must at once be appreciated. Neither a *Money* nor a *London Assurance* would have been possible in 1810. These, and other plays of a similar cast, were inspired by the new schools of scenic design, of costuming and of acting, both Lytton and Boucicault realising that there was now the possibility for the suitable interpretation of comedies based, not like the earlier comedy-farces upon theatrical types and conventions, but upon the manners and men of contemporary life. The stage Irishman, the stage butler, the stage friend with his blundering ways, all are with us yet in pale replica—relics of the past; but fundamentally we may say that the whole tendency of the writing of comedy since 1840 has been towards realism, and that tendency in its turn is dependent upon the gradual movements in scenic and in costume design which, traceable in the preceding century, first became dominant and popular in the age of Victoria.

It is interesting to notice how soon after Planché's experiment the newer style became acclimatised. We hear in 1820 of ridiculous combinations in the dress of different ages and nations, but when, about the thirties of the century, "D. G." set about to write an introduction for Cumberland's edition of Macfarren's *Lestocq*, based on the homonymous opera of Scribe, he saw fit to contrast favourably the English with the French setting. One can see from his words how closely the new realism and the popular spectacle were bound together in the contemporary mind:

> The contracted size of the French theatres, and the parsimonious economy of their managers, forbid anything like a magnificent *spectacle*. Nothing can be more trumpery than their scenery and stage appointments; while their costume displays a heterogeneous jumble of all nations and times. A marble wig, stone helmet, steel waistcoat, and a pair of tin breeches for the ghost, would hardly astonish a Parisian audience.

This truly is a swinging back of the pendulum, and, even if we make some allowance for patriotic sentiment, we must believe that "the superadded charms of scenery and decoration so magnificently lavished upon *Lestocq* by the English manager" strove at least towards due correctness.

Naturally, with this elaboration of scenic and kindred effects, the curtain is brought into greater play than it was in past times. There are still plays which obviously move from scene to scene without its aid, but they are fewer in number than we may discover in the previous half-century. The stage directions to be found in Pocock's *Alfred the Great* (C.G. 1827) are almost unique: at the end of the first scene there is a note

[*March strikes up, and continues till the Stage is occupied in Scene the Second,*

while at the close of this scene, which represents a "Forest Country," the text runs

[*Music striking at the same time, which is continued in*

SCENE III.

Corfe Castle on an eminence.

The clicking flats of older times are mentioned in Hoskins' *De Valencourt* (Norwich, 1842):

Two side scenes close in, and hide the parties[1],

while in the extravaganza of *Valentine and Orson* (Lyc. 1844):

As the Chorus is going on, they rise and disperse about the Scene.... The flats close in[2].

References, however, to the curtain at the end of acts are now frequent. Thus the "*Curtain falls*" at the end of the first acts of Dimond's *Æthiop* (C.G. 1812) and *The Young Hussar* (D.L. 1807). With this use of the curtain must be associated that practice of final groupings and tableaux which is indicated in so many of the acting texts of the period. Perhaps *The Theatrical Repertory* is right in tracing the tradition to the German plays where

all the characters are arranged in a picturesque manner, and

[1] I. ii. [2] I.

stand in fixed attitudes, like images on pedestals, when the curtain drops[1].

By the twenties of the century the "images on pedestals" had become thoroughly English. "*The Curtain falls upon the picture*" and "*The Characters form into a Picture of mute attention and the drop falls*" are two stage directions in Dimond's *The Bride of Abydos* (D.L. 1818), and "*all the characters dispose themselves into cheerful groups, when the Curtain falls*" is another from the same author's *The Peasant Boy* (Lyc. 1811). This tendency towards the tableau is itself part of the spectacular movement of the early nineteenth century and is to be connected, too, with the miming indulged in so freely by the makers and producers of the melodrama[2]. Those "pictures" were loved by the spectators almost as much as the dialogue and the dramatic action, and the more successful effects were loudly applauded. As Sir Frank Benson's production of *Henry V* proves, the tradition is not dead even in our own days.

IV. *Actors, Authors, Managers and Publishers*

As regards acting talent the early nineteenth century was at once weak and strong. We can point to the Kembles and the Keans and the Robsons and find in the age a fine genius. We can peruse the dramatic reviews, and, noting the attention given to the performances, we can picture the age as an age of the actor. On the other hand, we may study certain other records of the half-century and discover a surprising lack of skill and originality, a sterile sameness which speaks of an age of decay. Above all, we may look at the actor-manager star system and see there elements of danger for the theatre. It is perfectly true that in previous periods dramatists had deliberately written tragedies and comedies for particular players; instances of this abound[3]; but usually the playwrights cast their gaze beyond one individual. Up to 1800

[1] No. IV. S. 10/10/1801. [2] See *infra*, pp. 102–4.

[3] See *A History of Restoration Drama*, pp. 64–74; *A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 40–1; *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 39–41.

the stock companies, varying though they did from season to season, were comparatively constant, and an author would realise that, on taking his work to Drury Lane or to Covent Garden, a certain dozen performers would be used for his play. In the nineteenth century, the companies were constantly changing; a multitude of lesser stars, continually flashing up and flickering away, clustered round the planets of greater magnitude—the Keans and the Macreadys. When, therefore, Talfourd declares that he wrote his *Glencoe* (H.[2] 1840) and *The Athenian Captive* (H.[2] 1838) for Macready, we are to understand that for Macready and for Macready alone he wrote them. No thought of another performer would enter his mind. So Mathews is the predominating influence in Colman's mind when he pens *The Actor of All Work* (H.[2] 1817), and Kean and Kemble similarly dominate other dramas. The consequence of this, itself one of the causes of theatrical doctrine in the age, must be treated later[1]; here the bare facts alone must be noted. In addition to this, one may observe the carelessness with which even more important productions were prepared. The actor-manager was sure of his part, probably sure of his patronage among the audience, and as a result the rehearsals were permitted to take care of themselves. Perhaps the lesser actors, knowing that all eyes would be on the star, and losing heart, chose the primrose path of easy dalliance. At any rate, newspaper criticisms show us that frequently the ensemble of productions left much to be desired. The weaknesses of the star system are well outlined in a comment by William Archer upon Macready the manager. After noting the actor's "artistic scrupulousness," the biographer has to confess that

> this artistic scrupulousness...was accompanied by a large amount of the inartistic unscrupulousness of the typical "star." His own part was everything; the opportunities of his fellow-actors, and even the poet's text, must all give place to the complete development of his effects. "When he played Othello," says George Vandenhoff, "Iago was to be *nowhere*!...Iago was a mere *stoker*, whose business it was to supply Othello's passion

[1] See *infra*, pp. 68–9.

with fuel, and keep up his high-pressure. The next night, perhaps, he took Iago; and lo! presto! everything was changed. Othello was to become a mere puppet for Iago to play with; a pipe for Iago's master-skill to 'sound from its lowest note to the top of its compass'." He would probably have glozed the egoism of this policy by arguing that the opportunities should be to him who can make use of them, and that, with country companies, it was useless to strive for an "all-round" effect. But the tendency, alas! was dominant whatever his surroundings. Even Fanny Kemble, as Lady Macbeth, had to sacrifice her legitimate opportunities to his self-aggrandizement[1].

The way of the ordinary actors was made the simpler because of the type-characterisation in so many dramas of the time, this type-characterisation being both a result and a cause of the methods of performance in the theatres. *The Actors' Hand-Book*, published by Dicks, although it is a "Guide to the Stage for Amateurs," provides us with much interesting information. At the very opening of this little pamphlet we are somewhat surprised to learn that "a good stock of tights, boots, hats, swords, &c., &c., often procures a young man an engagement when he could not obtain one on his merits[2]." This is truly an instance of clothes making the actor. And what is the actor? He is a man who must abstain from originality[3]; he is a man who must learn how to express some two-score emotions in a conventional manner. Thus rage demands

> rapidity, interruption, rant, harshness, and trepidation. The neck is stretched out, the head forward, often nodding, and shaken in a menacing manner against the object of the passion...the mouth open, and drawn on each side towards the ears, showing the teeth in a gnashing posture; the feet often stamping; the right arm frequently thrown out and menacing, with the clenched fist shaken, and a general and violent agitation of the whole body[4].

One example is sufficient; there is no need to go through the pitys and the fears and the jealousies. We have seen enough to realise the conventionality imposed upon the ordinary performer, to see both the simplicity and the torture of his part.

[1] W. Archer, *W. C. Macready* (1890), pp. 210–11.
[2] p. 8. [3] p. 26. [4] p. 22.

If, however, the styles of acting were rapidly becoming more and more conventionalised, the audiences as a whole, probably because of the general weakness in dramatic effort, looked rather towards the histrionic performance than towards the piece presented. The constant backslidings of the drunken Cooke were easily forgiven because of this fact. Leigh Hunt in his *Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres* (1807) has no doubt on the matter. "If any man," he says,

> not very fond of music, will reflect a little between the acts of one of the modern comedies, he will find that his chief entertainment has arisen from the actors totally abstracted from the author[1].

The same critic then affords us a glimpse of the reflex influence upon dramatic authorship which this condition of affairs naturally induced. "The authors," he continues,

> know this as well as anybody... If there is a countryman, it must be adapted to EMERY; if an Irishman, to JOHNSTONE; if a gabbling humourist, it must be copied from nothing but the manner of FAWCETT.... The loss of LEWIS... whose gaiety of limb is of so much benefit to modern comedy, would be a perfect rheumatism to MR REYNOLDS; and the loss of MUNDEN, who gives it such an agreeable variety of grin, would affect him little less than a lock-jaw[2].

Should we need further proof regarding the interdependence of the drama and the stage in those years, we have only to listen a little more to Hunt's criticism:

> If the principal characters of REYNOLDS and of DIBDIN are always out of nature, their representation... must be unnatural also; and as our comic actors are perpetually employed upon these punchinellos, as they are always labouring to grimace and grin them into applause, they become habituated and even partial to their antics, and can never afterwards separate the effect from the means, the applause from the unnatural style of acting[3].

This is putting the cart before the horse, it is true, but it serves to illustrate one great weakness in the period. Only in the very last decades of this period is a change to be discovered. Occasionally, in the earlier years, an individual such as Bannister seemed to reach a conception of art beyond

[1] Introduction, p. vi.
[2] *Id.* pp. vii and viii.
[3] *Id.* p. 81.

that of his time[1], but it was not until the late thirties and the forties of the century that any general movement is to be traced towards a more naturalistic style of performance. This newer naturalistic style, of course, must be closely associated with the changes in stage settings and in costume designs. When Liston had to abandon his awkward boy's suit in burlesque[2], he had naturally to cultivate a style more in keeping with his new habiliments, and when the stock comic actor lost his inconsistent and crudely exaggerated garments he had to make himself appear what he now seemed, a man of real life and not a figure in a harlequinade. Realism may not be the highest type of theatrical art, but this realism had to be before anything of a higher type could be evolved on the stage. The expressionism of today is based on the realism of yesterday; it could not have been founded on the primitive and vulgar conventions of the early nineteenth century playhouses.

Turning from the actors to the authors themselves, we find once more ample causes for decline. It has been seen that throughout the course of the eighteenth century the income of the average dramatist was rising[3]. At first, it seemed as if the nineteenth century was to carry on this forward movement, but, in spite of the fact that the authors later won some hard-wrung privileges, the passing by of the earlier decades shows nothing but a retrograde movement. The records of Reynolds' life indicate clearly that the income derived from the dramatist from the theatre was, in the very first years, as good as, if not better than, that which a dramatist was accustomed to receive in 1790. For *The Caravan* (D.L. 1803), successful because of its dog and tank effect, this author received £350[4]; for a damned play and two successful afterpieces made out of the condemned material he got £740 in all[5]; £300 for *Out of Place* (C.G. 1805), £500 for *The Delinquent* (C.G. 1805), £500 for *Begone Dull Care* (C.G. 1808)[6], £600 for *The Exile* (C.G. 1808)[7] and £700

[1] See *supra*, p. 40.
[2] See *supra*, p. 44.
[3] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 46–8.
[4] *Life and Times* (1823), ii. 351.
[5] *Id.* ii. 354.
[6] *Id.* ii. 365.
[7] *Id.* ii. 377.

for *The Free Knights* (C.G. 1810)[1] are thoroughly representative. In passing it is to be noted that the highest gains came from the afterpieces and from the musical three-act *Free Knights*, precisely those plays which, as Reynolds himself tells us, were the easiest to write. The effect of this can readily be imagined. Five-act comedies became rarer and rarer, the dramatic authors quite naturally preferring to earn their money by the less arduous paths of operatic farce and melodramatic spectacle. Dibdin's profits were about the same as those of Reynolds. In 1800 this author cleared £200 for his comedy *Liberal Opinions* (C.G. 1800)[2], £630 for the operatic *Family Quarrels* (C.G. 1802) in 1802[3], 300 guineas (and 60 guineas for the copyright) for *Thirty Thousand* (C.G. 1804) in 1804[4], £200 for the operatic *White Plume* (C.G. 1806) in 1806[5], £270 with a copyright free of £100 for the comedy *Five Miles Off* (H.[2] 1806)[6], and £300 with a copyright fee of £60 for the opera *Two Faces under a Hood* (C.G. 1807)[7]. The declining receipts, to be discussed later, are indicated by the fact that for *What Next?* (D.L. 1816) in 1816 Dibdin received only £100 with £40 for the copyright[8]. These records of Reynolds and Dibdin are corroborated by the notes provided by Peake concerning the theatrical income of George Colman the younger. Thus £550 each was received by that playwright for *The Poor Gentleman* (C.G. 1801) and for *Who Wants a Guinea?* (C.G. 1805), this "being the customary price for a five-act comedy" at the rate of £300 for the first nine nights, £100 on the twentieth night and £150 for the copyright[9]. For a special success, such as *John Bull* (C.G. 1803), the playwright might expect even higher fees; this comedy brought in to Colman £1200 in all.

The change, however, was soon to come. After chronicling these prices, Peake indulges in a lament:

> Alas! times are sadly changed for authors; but in those days there were no ruinous salaries, nor was the star system in vogue (the stepping-stone to the downfall of the drama of England)....

[1] *Life and Times* (1823), ii. 387.
[2] *Reminiscences* (1827), i. 267.
[3] *Id.* i. 347.
[4] *Id.* i. 387.
[5] *Id.* i. 390.
[6] *Id.* i. 396.
[7] *Id.* i. 413.
[8] *Id.* ii. 91.
[9] R. B. Peake, *op. cit.* ii. 413.

At that period, an author could write for a company, but now it must be for an individual; and the individual is paid such a monstrous sum for his nightly performance that the manager is incapacitated from giving a proper remuneration to the author[1].

Fitzball suggests another reason. The managers, he thinks, prefer to pay 3 francs for a French play instead of providing £300 for an English author. Unless this is changed,

> how else are men gifted, perhaps, as Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, or many others of great genius, blushing unseen, languishing under a cold sun, ever to add a literary lyric glory to their country? while on the other hand, we are sneered at by our continental, dramatic allies, who believe, and not unjustly, that we have no dramatists of our own[2].

Only the outstanding author, then, could command a fair price for his play, and even that fair price was below what had once been paid for similar efforts. Miss Mitford received only £200 for her *Julian* (C.G. 1823); Knowles got £400 for *Virginius* (C.G. 1820); Boucicault, for the most famous play of the age, *London Assurance* (C.G. 1841), pocketed only £300. Apparently £50 was considered a good price for a melodrama produced at the Surrey in 1829[3]. A few writers of the earlier decades, like Thomas Dibdin, may have been "Play-wrights in ordinary" with annual fees at one theatre or another[4], but even that method of remuneration seems to have been wiped out in later years.

If, however, in one way the authors found their incomes considerably smaller than had been those of their fathers, they succeeded in winning one great victory which was to be the foundation of the future prosperity of dramatic

[1] *Op. cit.* ii. 414.
[2] E. Fitzball, *op. cit.* ii. 42–3.
[3] *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829), pp. 246–7.
[4] *The Theatrical Repertory*, No. xxii. M. 15/2/1802. Interesting notes regarding Dibdin's position are given in his *Reminiscences* (1827). His salary at C.G. in 1801 was £260, but he succeeded in increasing this to £543 for the season (i. 277). In 1804 he cleared £1515 in all (i. 368). Later he acted as author and manager at the Surrey for £15 a week (i. 433). In 1823 and 1828 Jerrold may have been the Coburg playwright. In 1829 he got £5 a week from the Surrey for his services as author (W. Jerrold, *Douglas Jerrold* (1918), i. 72, 83, 92, 106). Planché at one time agreed to write solely for the Adelphi (*Recollections*, i. 44).

authorship. Although a playwright could count on a "reward" of only a hundred pounds for his labours, the dramatists of this time, by virtue of concerted action, prepared the path for that age we now enjoy, when an author, through the successful run of one single play, may look forward to a life of ease, and perhaps of indolence. It is well known that up to this time piracy of various kinds ruled on the theatrical high-seas. Planché informs us that, when a youth, he was an actor in a troupe playing at the Theatre Royal, Greenwich. The play chosen for performance was Colman's *The Actor of All Work* (H.[2] 1817), which had never been printed. However, Planché's "memory was in those days really marvellous," and "he wrote the whole piece out after one night's hearing at the Haymarket, going a second night to correct errors, and scarcely finding a word to add or to alter[1]." Planché's theft illustrates one form of piracy in practice at this period; a petition of Charles Bucke, author of *The Italians* (D.L. 1819), presented on June 4, 1829, illustrates another[2]. Quite clearly the petitioner states the general view of the age, that, when a dramatist had published a play, he made it thereby "amenable to the appropriation of all licensed theatres throughout the kingdom." Such a state of affairs, while it was good for the manager, obviously was very unfair to the author, and we are by no means surprised when we find, in the thirties of the century, active opposition to the reigning beliefs of the time.

Peculiarly enough, it was Planché himself who was the instrument by which the liberty of the dramatic author was secured. A certain play of his had been successful in London, and application was made by Murray of the Edinburgh Theatre Royal for a text (it had not then been published). Planché demanded a fee of £10, which Murray declined to pay. The manager now resorted to underhand devices. Surreptitiously he obtained a manuscript copy of the play and produced it at his theatre. Planché, knowing the legal difficulties, called a number of fellow-dramatists to his rooms

[1] *Recollections* (1872), i. 24–5.
[2] Printed in *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829), pp. 148–50.

to talk the matter over and, as a result of their conference, the Hon. George Lamb was induced to bring a Copyright Bill before Parliament. This, which gave the dramatic writer "indisputable control over his own property," received the Royal assent on June 10, 1833[1]. In order to render the Act operative a *Dramatic Authors' Society* was formed, "with a secretary...authorised by the members generally to grant conditional permission as the agent of the author." As Planché confesses, it was less easy to enforce the law than to make it, but "the first step was...gained by English dramatists...to place themselves on a footing with their continental brethren[2]."

One great blow was received during the dramatists' jubilation over their triumph. At first sight, it seemed that certain copyrights were worth a considerable sum of money. Shortly after the passing of the Act, Fitzball, who had had many of his many dramas published by Cumberland, imagined that El Dorado was opening before him. His hopes, however, were dashed when he discovered that Cumberland claimed the right of collecting the acting fees and when a legal judgment was given in the latter's favour[3]. It is to this case Planché refers in his pessimistic note to the 1879 edition of *High, Low, Jack, and the Game* (Olym. 1833)[4]. Still further, in spite of the benefits accruing from the acting fees for dramas written after June 1833, it was found that a great source of income was taken away from the playwright. All through the eighteenth century the reading public had been growing. Popular plays went into many editions; and the printed texts, if they were not dignified quartos or aristocratic folios, were at least octavos of decency and gravity of demeanour, for which a reader was prepared to pay anything

[1] *Recollections*, i. 148–50.

[2] *Id.* i. 196–200. An interesting comparison of French and English conditions appears on pp. 201–10. On the position of the French dramatists and Pixérécourt's activities in connection with the Comité des Auteurs, see P. Ginisty, *Le Mélodrame* (Paris, 1910), pp. 104–8. The English Dramatic Authors' Society is discussed in W. Jerrold, *op. cit.* i. 226–9.

[3] E. Fitzball, *op. cit.* i. 271–2.

[4] In *Extravaganzas*, i. 119.

from two to five shillings. Undoubtedly the publishing of a popular play at this price must have been exceedingly profitable, and a bookseller was prepared to take a risk and to give an author—even an unknown author—a substantial lump sum for the copyright. The democratisation of literature, however, passed into a still further stage in the nineteenth century. For the most part the drama ceased to be a fancy of the *élite*, and grubby hands fumbled over that which had lain by oriental-perfumed fans and dandyishly tasselled canes. Except for a few works by the dramatists of the poetic school, the plays of the nineteenth century had to be produced at low prices. In olden days, we are informed once more by Planché, "successful dramas had a certain sale,"

> but these days are fast disappearing, and booksellers were becoming chary of purchasing the copyrights of any dramatic pieces whatever, unless at such low prices that they were able to publish them in a small size at sixpence or a shilling, instead of, as formerly, in 8vo, at three or five shillings[1].

Truly a Scylla and a Charybdis—on the one hand, wary and astute provincial managers who refused to make payment to an author, who even refused to be caught and to answer for their sins; on the other, Cumberlands and Lacys and Dicks and Frenchs, willing to publish perhaps, but unable to give more to the writer than a Marlowe or a Fletcher may have received from an Elizabethan bookseller.

Complaints, naturally, are to be found on all sides. Perhaps we may take as typical the words of Douglas Jerrold uttered in 1832[2].

> Were we asked what profession promised, with the greatest show of success, to form a practical philosopher, we should on the instant make reply, "The calling of an English dramatist." There is in his case such a fine adaptation of the means to the end that we cannot conceive how, especially if he be very successful, the dramatist can avoid becoming a first form scholar in the academy of the stoics. The daily lessons set for him to con are decked with

[1] *Op cit.* i. 154–5.

[2] Review of T. J. Thackeray's *On Theatrical Emancipation and the Rights of Dramatists* in *The New Monthly Magazine* (May, 1832). On this and on other connected matters see Walter Jerrold, *op. cit.* i. 201–6.

that "consummate flavour" of wisdom, patience; they preach to him meekness under indigence; continual labour with scanty and uncertain reward; quiescence under open spoliation; satisfaction to see others garner the harvest he has sown; with at least the glorious certainty of that noble indigence lauded by philosophers and practised by the saints—poverty, stark-naked poverty, with grey hairs; an old age exulting in its forlornness! If, after these goodly lessons, whipped into him with daily birch, he become no philosopher, then is all stoicism the fraud of knaves, and even patience but a word of two syllables. But we are convinced of the efficacy of the system. English dramatists *are* stoics, and not in the speculative sense, but in the hard practical meaning of the term. Time has hallowed their claim to the proud distinction, it is consecrated to them by the base coats of their prime, and the tatters of their old age; not only endured without complaint, but enjoyed as "their charter."

Under these conditions the nineteenth century melodrama, farce and extravaganza took their rise. As is perfectly obvious, a whole series of hindrances were operative calculated to retard the development of higher drama. The coarseness of the audience, the vagaries of the actor-manager, the pruriency of the censor, the activities of the "pirate" and the niggardliness of the publisher—all these cast their clouds over the playwriting profession during the course of the half-century. As we shall see, this bare statement of fact does not completely exonerate the literary men of the period for failing to produce something more worthy of the ancient traditions in the English theatre; yet it cannot be denied that, in spite of the vast amount of pioneer work which was being done during these years in every branch of dramatic and theatrical activity, a survey of the general conditions under which the dramatists worked makes but pitiful reading. The consequences of those conditions must now be studied.

CHAPTER II

THE DRAMATIC CONDITIONS OF THE AGE

I. *The Reasons of Decline*

IN the preceding sections many matters of interest have been rapidly hurried over. It is now time to consider the relations of some of the facts observed to the general dramatic debility of the half-century. Concerning the existence of this debility no one was, or is, in doubt. On all sides we can hear the cries, now monstrous pitiful like Bottom's roar, now stern-lipped with would-be grandeur, declaiming on the weakness of the time. The difficulty is not to recognise the phenomena but to trace to their sources the underlying causes. It is not sufficient to talk glibly of the general retrograde movement in drama from the times of Shakespeare; the day has passed for such generalisations. Nor may we hastily label the Romantic era as "lyric" as distinguished from the "dramatic" spirit of Elizabethan England. The Romantic poets may have been intensely lyrical in the sense that they were continually writing and speaking of themselves, but the lyric poets were not the only authors of that age, and their failure is only part of the general failure of the age as a whole.

On surveying this period, one fact strikes us at once; the presence of three distinct types of authors, or rather the production of three distinct types of plays. The great mass of nineteenth century dramas are the melodramas, farces, spectacles and extravaganzas turned out in their hundreds by the Planchés and the Fitzballs. These are the dramas which were successful both at the larger and at the smaller theatres. Besides these, however, there were the various plays written by more pretentious authors—the *Ions* and the *Moneys*—

which made attempts to secure something of an older and higher tone. Sometimes these plays were tragedies, sometimes comedies, sometimes tragi-comedies, but in all the effort was made to provide something better than that ladled out promiscuously to the spectators in melodrama and in farce. Finally, there were the "poetic plays," those dramas written by the romantic poets, sometimes with the stage in view, sometimes with no thought but the publisher, which never saw actual embodiment in the theatre. It is difficult at times to make a clear distinction between this and the second type, for such plays as Coleridge's *Remorse* (D.L. 1813) and Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (D.L. 1800) secured sympathetic managers, but there is at least some distinction to be made between them.

The problem of the decline of the drama is more easily studied, it seems to me, when we split it into a series of independent yet connected questions, which might be framed in some such wise. (1) Why was there not a greater connection between the true poets of the time and the theatre? (2) Why did those more talented men who wrote for the stage fail to pen works of a truly permanent value? (3) Why did not other non-poetic writers embrace a stage career more willingly? (4) Why did the "theatre-authors" indulge in such crude farce and extravaganza and melodrama? Putting the questions in this way, we may gain at least some dim idea of the genuine causes of the failure. Personally, I can find no absolute authority for Professor Watson's statement[1] that the contemporary answers to the general query regarding dramatic decline differed from decade to decade. It is critically comforting, perhaps, to say that from 1800 to 1810 the size of the theatres was blamed, from 1810 to 1820 the paucity of good authors and managers, from 1820 to 1830 the star system and spectacle, from 1830 to 1840 the patent monopoly and the vagaries of the adventurer Bunn, and from 1840 to 1850 the French companies and opera. As a matter of fact, the contemporary explanations are varied and perhaps in the end do not give us all the information we desire.

[1] *Sheridan to Robertson*, p. 136.

It may be well to turn from these to the questions proposed above, and try to answer each, both from the point of view of contemporaries and from the point of view of the present century.

(1) There can be no question concerning the sharp cleavage between the poets and the theatre. Coleridge succeeded in getting one of his plays acted; Byron was director of a patent theatre for a number of years and brought several of his plays on the stage; Browning, it is well known, wrote for Macready; but the vast mass of the dramas penned by those poets who are now so famous for their lyrical work never passed beyond the stage of print, occasionally not even beyond the stage of manuscript. It is easy to find excuses for them; it is pleasant to exonerate the Wordsworths and the Shelleys by pointing the scornful finger at the Fitzballs and the Kenneys. But, after all, greater dramatists in the past have accepted the conditions of their own times. The Elizabethan theatre was in no state of perfection when Shakespeare wrote; nay more, Shakespeare as well as any of his academic contemporaries realised its failings; but the dramatic genius that was Shakespeare's subordinated the clowns and the clowneries to its own will. Jonson might sneer and pen a dull *Sejanus*; Shakespeare wrote a *Lear*. An individual author may endeavour to establish new forms, may point out inconsistencies, may show his dissatisfaction with this or with that, but, if he be great, he will do so, not by turning away in contempt, but by remoulding the evil conditions set before him. An impartial survey of the romantic poetry reveals the fact that the poets—with the possible exception of Byron—were at least tinged with the brush of priggism. There is a certain clergymanlike superiority about Wordsworth which is lost only in his more imaginative moods; Shelley is undoubtedly "superior" in his own way; Keats, cockney though he was, shares the same quality. Perhaps, if the word prig offend, one might rephrase by saying that the romantic poets all took themselves too seriously. Their lyrical triumphs spring from that which, in another way, made them weak. The "I" is always intruding

into their lines; "*I* fall upon the thorns of life," "When *I* have fears that *I* may cease to be," "Strange fits of passion have *I* known"—again and again the note is struck, now meanly and low, now triumphantly and with glorious cadence. The lyric mood may exist alongside the dramatic, as Shakespeare and Webster testify, but the dramatic mood depends ultimately on a sense of humour. A sense of humour springs from the power of seeing two sides to a question, or, in other words, from the power of seeing beyond oneself. Both tragedy and comedy depend upon the ability of the author to forget for a moment his own petty loves and woes, or so to transform these that they become universal. This the romantic poets, because they were always thinking of themselves, failed to do. Wordsworth is immersed in Wordsworth; Coleridge is fascinated by Coleridge's own metaphysical cleverness; Shelley soars with his own airy spirit.

The romantic poets, therefore, are not seen in the theatre, not because they were kept out, but because they would not, or could not, go in. Perhaps they are not to be blamed overmuch; it may be that their education was to blame. A dramatic author often has to have the goad of sheer necessity or the example of some far-seeing critics. With the exception of Keats, the romantic poets were not forced to make an income for themselves, and the critics gave them little aid. What was needed at this time was a sound body of scientific, historical and appreciative interpretation of past dramatic efforts; but that type of dramatic criticism which has entirely revisualised the efforts of Shakespeare was not to be born for nearly a century. For Coleridge, the critic, Shakespeare was a pure poet and a creator of character; concerning the playwright's dramatic construction the author of *Biographia Literaria* is silent. Hazlitt has a somewhat clearer view of what is wanted in a drama, but even he fails; while for Lamb a play is evidently good when it possesses one or two passages of lyrical beauty. Malone in those days was battling manfully forward towards a clearer conception of the Elizabethan stage, but no critic of standing collaborated with him by

showing how certain features of Shakespearian drama were suited for a platform, and unsuited for a picture-frame, theatre. In their plays, therefore, the poets blindly followed the Elizabethan dramatists without capturing their tone. Soliloquies, pages in length, abound, and the language is neither the language of the older nor that of modern times. The critical bias, too, had another grave influence. The metaphysical and philosophical tone of Coleridge, merely a reflex of a general spirit, overstressed the abstract, and as a consequence those concrete elements which are of such importance in drama were more or less neglected. Joanna Baillie might have been a great playwright, but we can see one at least of the causes of her failure in her *Plays on the Passions*.

One excuse for the poets, adumbrated by Leigh Hunt[1] and warmly advocated in our own days by Professor Watson, is the thesis that a self-respecting literary man could not have been expected to undergo the tortures a nineteenth century dramatist is supposed to have undergone. It is undoubtedly true that in the theatre of the period a playwright could get very thoroughly damned indeed, and that, if he sought for success, he had to pen his play in such a way as to get the applause of the galleries. But are these such real deterrents to true dramatic production as Professor Watson and Leigh Hunt seem to imagine? Did Æschylus sit with folded arms because he had to compete in the theatre for a prize which was often awarded according to the plaudits of a vast and essentially "popular" audience? Is the hissing (which Professor Watson pictures so vividly) so terribly wrong; is it not in some ways better than the present polite acceptance of a new piece, which permits a wretched play, with the aid of

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 50–2. Hunt avers that the whole endeavour of a comic writer of his age must be to pen for the galleries, and adds a recipe for the popular play:

"An inveterate love of punning;
A deformed alteration of common characters and incidents;
A dialogue either extremely flowery or extremely familiar;
An affectation of ardent loyalty, and, consequent to this affectation, a gross flattery of the audience;
Lastly...a most abject system of begging the favour of the house."

a little puffing, to poison the town for a twelvemonth? Did a great dramatist of any period disdain composition because of the presence in the theatre of the profane vulgar? Truly Kemble's remark, cited below[1], seems more worthy and more surely artistic than the attitude of the poets who are thus so deeply pitied. We must look at those Romantic poets honestly, and, if we do, we realise that, in spite of their high-sounding Pantisocracies and their revolutionary views, they were too aristocratic and affected—thin-skinned, too, preferring to write their lyrics which might be ridiculed or loved in private rather than attempt dramas the open condemnation of which might ruffle their dignity. Perhaps criticism has been overkind in the past to these Romantic poets. They have long been the spoilt children of our literature; we have been too readily inclined to bow to their pettish wills, to find excuses for their failures, instead of treating them honestly, and perhaps a little severely, as spoilt children ought to be treated.

More detailed notes we may leave till later, and, even with this brief summary, we must remember that other considerations have to be taken into account; but, viewed impartially, the question seems to demand one clear answer; the failure of romantic genius to produce a true and expressive romantic drama was due not so much to outside theatrical influences as to a weakness on the part of the poets themselves.

(2) Yet there were some poets who entered into the lists. Coleridge and Byron in the earlier years, aided by Talfourd and Sheridan Knowles and Browning towards the end of the half-century, tried hard to win popular applause for their efforts. Not one of them, however, really gripped the imagination of the age, in spite of the success of Bulwer's *The Lady of Lyons* (C.G. 1838); not one produced a dramatic masterpiece which can be looked upon as the starting-point for further art development. It will be seen, when we proceed to analyse their separate works, that each in his own way had something of a talent for the theatre, that each produced works which may, even in this century, be read

[1] *Infra*, p. 75.

with pleasure; we might even go further and declare, if one or two of these works had been found in manuscript and the authors had not been known, if a literary Puck had passed them off as seventeenth century dramas, we might now be reading them in much be-commented and limited editions—perhaps, who knows? they might have been set as selected texts for university examinations. All this we may confess; but the fact remains that they did not provide that for which the age was seeking and which it found dimly suggested by Robertson and robustly by Ibsen.

Again, in studying this question, we must consider the superiority of the authors. In putting forward his *Glencoe* (H.[2] 1840) Talfourd gives us a preface in which he discusses the lamentable state of the stage. One sometimes feels, in reading these prefaces, that the writers hesitate between two ideals—getting their plays accepted, and getting them rejected. Sometimes they are positively apologetic because they have soiled their fair hands with the dust of old Drury. "A flimsy, flippant tribe" they are—

> Authors,—who blush to throw their pearls to swine;
> Vain of their triumphs of *rejected* Plays,
> And talents, never mortified by praise;
> Who humbly vaunt, who haughtily confess
> Their tasteful toils uninjur'd by success,—
> Seldom insulted by a *three-days run*,
> And complimented often with—*not one*:
> Glow-worms of wit, expos'd to light, they fade;
> But shine and sparkle in their native shade!
> Their boast, their proud distinction, *not* to please,
> Hooted and hiss'd they calmly sit at ease;
> While conscious Genius happily supplies
> The laurel wreaths a niggard world denies[1].

This satirical note does indeed touch upon a feature of the age which has been, it would appear, unduly neglected by the literary historians.

Beyond the tone of superiority, however, we have to note the absolutely uninventive character of the various tragic

[1] W. R. Spencer, *Urania* (D.L. 1802), prologue by the Rt. Hon. Lord John Townshend.

and comic efforts of those poets who descend to the playhouse. Their blank-verse is Shakespeare's or Fletcher's; their themes are old; they talk in a language strange to their contemporaries, throwing in perhaps a melodramatic trick or two as a sop to Cerberus. As one looks at the audiences of the time, one seems to see them constantly thirsting, thirsting, thirsting. The French Revolution has rumbled away in Napoleon's cannons; a new social age is born; and here are the dramatists giving them Greek tragedies and "Love Chases" of Elizabethan life, and Kings and Princes of days gone by. "The subject of the drama," says a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*[1] of Tennant's *Cardinal Beaton*, "is a conspiracy—and we are partial to conspiracies. They cannot but be interesting." The external conspiracies of the *littérateurs*, however, are one and all of the past, are artificial, are removed from the social surroundings of the period, are, above all, sentimental and decorous. The age wanted action and robustness, as the popularity of the melodramas witnesses, but the poets, restrained by their high thoughts, would not give it that for which it craved. In an article on *Modern Dramas, and Dramatic Writers* another writer in *Blackwood's*[2], signing his essay "Titus," observes that while "Vice furnished the plot for most of the Elizabethans," the romantic poets rarely treated this theme with the same freedom as had been done in earlier times. Murder was part of the stock-in-trade of the minor playwrights; the poets were too decorous to rely on such vulgar props. Another essay in *The London Magazine*, in the form of *A Letter to the Dramatists of Today*[3], calls further attention to this weakness. "*Action*," says the writer, "is the essence of drama; nay, its definition: business, bustle, hurly, and combustion dire, are indispensable to effective drama....But" [addressing the dramatists] "you seem to think that the whole virtue of tragedy lies in its *poeticity*....At any rate, if you don't think thus, you write as if you did....In short your action is nothing, and your

[1] Vol. xiv. Oct. 1823, p. 422.
[2] *Id.* p. 557.
[3] Vol. viii. July 1823, p. 85. The letter is signed "John Lacy" but is known to have been written by George Darley.

poetry every thing." These judgments are perfectly just, and, as will be seen more clearly when we contrast the poetic with the "illegitimate" plays, go far towards explaining the dulness and dramatic failure of the former. Undoubtedly, if we had lived in 1830, we should have preferred to see an honest melodrama at Sadler's Wells rather than an artificial, and therefore dishonest, masterpiece at Covent Garden. Such feelings undoubtedly swayed at least some spectators of the time, and many must have echoed the sentiments expressed by H. S. Leigh in his good-humoured verses:

I gape in Covent Garden's walls,
I doze in Drury Lane;
I strive in the Lyceum stalls
To keep awake—in vain.
There's nought in the dramatic way
That I can quite abide,
Except the pieces that they play
Upon the Surrey side[1].

One appreciates, perhaps, the efforts of the reformers; but no amount of appreciation can dim our eyes to the fact that the reform they aimed at was only the revival of antique forms which possessed not an atom of significance for the newer age.

(3) Not all the reformers were poets; among them is numbered the novelist Bulwer Lytton; but the majority had won their fame rather in the realms of verse than in the realms of fiction. One may perhaps wonder why some of those many prose writers, who had presented such living galleries of types, did not endeavour to win fame in the playhouses. Daniel Terry, in presenting his dramatisation of *The Antiquary* (C.G. 1820) to the public, had indulged

a wish, that the mysterious and powerful pen, to which the world is so greatly indebted for the immortal productions whence these plays have been extracted, had sometimes turned its powerful force directly to the Drama,—and [lamented] the causes by which it has been diverted or withheld from raising the present state of our dramatic literature to an equality with that of its brightest age[2].

[1] *Carols of Cockayne* (1874), p. 43. [2] Advertisement.

Why did Thackeray not approach the theatre? Why did Dickens pen only one or two trivial farces? To find a true answer to this question one must now move beyond the failings of the authors. It is certainly true that the qualities that make a great novelist are not necessarily those which will suffice for a dramatist. When one compares Dickens' farces[1] with his fictional work one sees how firmly his style is based on the narrative method. The humour and the sympathy of Dickens are not expressed through his dialogue alone; they are conveyed to the reader by means of a subtle intermingling of dialogue and humorous or emotional comment. This we may admit, but beyond that there were many external causes which led men to other walks of literature just as external causes led many men in the Elizabethan age to the public theatres.

The first of these is the lessening rewards given to the writers of plays[2]. A successful novelist could now build up for himself a handsome fortune. Dickens attained to considerable affluence, and Scott could erect a lordly Abbotsford on the profits of the *Waverley* series. Periodical literature, too, was increasing annually. The great reviews, the more popular magazines, the comic papers, the annuals—all of these attracted bands of authors, partly because of the continual clamouring for material, partly because of the then excellent remuneration offered. "The crosses and disappointments which attend dramatic productions[3]," added to the pittance meted out to even the popular playwright, hardly offered sufficient attraction to men who elsewhere could earn money easily. The Elizabethan age and our own period have this in common, and so differ from the early nineteenth century, that the stage offered and offers the lordliest rewards to the successful author[4].

The explanation of these small sums given to dramatic

[1] See *infra*, p. 209.
[2] See *supra*, pp. 51–3.
[3] *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829), p. 242.
[4] I do not, of course, suggest that the payment for dramatic authorship in the Elizabethan period was especially high; but clearly a man such as Shakespeare could hope to earn far more from association with the theatre than from association with the printing press alone.

authors depends upon a series of concomitant circumstances all tending to the one result, the impoverishment of the manager. In spite of large theatres, the playhouses rarely could be made to pay. All devices were tried, from raising the prices (which led to riots) to lowering them (which led to bankruptcy), but every endeavour ended in failure. Costs were much higher than they had ever been before. The then wonderful machinery of the patent theatres demanded a large corps of property men; besides, theatrical machinery requires not only a large capital expenditure, there is a constant outlay for upkeep. The audiences demanded spectacle, and so scenery and costume had to be kept rich. The Grieves and the Telbins must have taken a fair share of the theatrical profits. Most important of all was the star system and the consequent rise in salaries. In 1812 the great comic actor Mathews thought that a weekly income of £17 was "*stupendous* and *magnificent*[1]"; by 1850 the major actors were demanding salaries which vied with those which are paid today to the more distinguished performers. With this great rise for the chief actors, the amounts paid to minor players likewise increased, and, when we consider the vast size of the stock-companies, we realise what a constant drain there was on the finances of the theatre. Little could remain for the poor author.

The star-system is being constantly blamed by contemporaries for the evil state of the drama, for it not only caused greater expense but also had a pernicious effect upon the work produced. In *The Italians* (D.L. 1819) Charles Bucke indulges in a long attack on Kean, who, the author declares, demanded that "tragedy must be martyrized into a MONODRAME." If a drama without a star-part was by chance accepted, then it was given only a slovenly performance. *Oxberry's Theatrical Inquisitor* (1828) takes up the same tale:

> To hope for another Shakespeare would be madness, so long as the stage continues in its present state....The croakers of the drama assert, that tragedies and comedies will not draw. Cast them strongly and try[2].

[1] Bunn, *The Stage*.

[2] pp. 110 and 147.

The actor-managers with their cuttings are blamed for much of the evil of the time[1]. Still another source of consequent iniquity is hinted at by the author of *Better Late than Never* (1824):

> In these days, when every play-goer complains of the poverty of the entertainment offered by the proprietors of the two "Great Theatres" to the public, it is no wonder their theatres should cease to be frequented, and that they should not cease to be poor. At present the ostensible proprietor or lessee at either house, is both manager and actor; and although this ought not to afford any excuse for such poverty of entertainment, it will, nevertheless, be found upon examination, to be the primary cause:—but when it is observed, that at one of these theatres, the proprietor is not only actor and manager, but also author, the result is not surprising.... What sensible independent writer will attend to an ignorant manager—"Sir, you must write to please the reigning taste"—consent to get up processions for bipeds, and curvettings for quadrupeds—and become the pander to such a taste?

This passage reveals at one and the same time the two causes of failure, the importunity of the managers and the superiority of the literary authors. One can imagine a Shakespeare making joyous or sublime use even of an elephant.

While we thus seek for one of the chief explanations in the star-system and in the errors of management[2], we must, on the other hand, remember that an unsuccessful author is not always the best and most impartial of witnesses. At least one writer, George Macfarren, rebutted the charges made by so many against those in command of the theatres:

> It has been a prevailing theme of late, to rail at theatrical jealousies, and the tyranny of Managers and Actors towards those servants of the Muse whose labours bring them as suitors to the door of the Green-Room. The Writer, who here appears before the Public, very confidently ventures to refute such prejudices, at least, as far as *Old Drury* is concerned: himself and his humble effort having been received, by every member of that establish-

[1] p. 52. See *supra*, pp. 48–9.
[2] See also R. B. Peake, *op. cit.* ii. 414–5.

ment whose talents were pressed into the service, with the utmost kindness and cordiality[1].

In addition to these deterrents (for, in spite of Macfarren's plea, we must believe that there is some truth in the complaints of others), the size of the patent theatres must have seemed an insuperable barrier to many. The large theatre was suited for no form of intimate drama, and its vastness undoubtedly hindered the development of true comedy and of domestic tragedy by frightening away those few who might have given originality to the playhouse. Everything seemed to conspire together to bring about the ruin of the stage.

It is not intended here to suggest that the drama of any period is created entirely by the force of external and economic appeals, but a study of theatrical history does convince us that such economic appeals must be largely considered when we regard, not merely dramatic activity in general, but the particular writers attracted to this form of literary art. The facts that many of the best brains of the Elizabethan period were recruited to the service of the stage, and that in our own times the theatre has once more been enriched by the application to its demands of the major writers, must be attributed partly at least to the pecuniary rewards which have been offered in these two periods and to the possibility of fame arising from theatrical authorship. On the other hand, the true dramatist is born, not made, and we are bound to believe that, in spite of the interest taken in the playhouse by such a man as Dickens, that there did not live in this half-century any single individual whose primary call it was to pen dramatic dialogue. Dickens' strength lay, not in the use of dialogue itself but in the blending of dialogue with narrative. Exactly the same is true of the work of Sir Walter Scott, who, beyond that objectivity which at first sight seems to be akin to the objectivity of the greater dramatists, secures his effects very largely by the constant impression

[1] *Malvina* (D.L. 1826), Advertisement. This may be compared with the preface to *The Rake and his Pupil* (Adel. 1833) where Buckstone praises the magnanimity of the manager Yates.

of his own personality upon the narrative portions of his novels. In this connection another remark may be made. If it is true that the outstanding dramatic writer must be born, it is also true that an author, not necessarily qualified in the first instance for theatrical work, may, by careful application and study of stage conditions, achieve success and fame by the penning of plays; examples of such authors are common in every land. One might, therefore, have expected that, with their interest in the fortunes and dignity of the theatre, some of the many novelists or poets of the period might have given something of dramatic worth to the early nineteenth century stage. Here again, however, we come back to the prevailing weaknesses of the romantic temperament. Among those who were most enthusiastic, Scott, Dickens and Byron stand out chief; but all of these failed to study dramatic conditions in such a manner as to improve their own work. Scott was a noble patron, a good friend to players and to playwrights, but he never set himself down to analyse the essential conditions governing dramatic authorship. Attendance at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, acting as chairman at various theatrical functions, welcoming notable players to his house, half-heartedly scribbling a play or two—beyond these things he could not go. Dickens might well have been an actor instead of a novelist, but again his association with the stage was not such as to prepare him for a career as a dramatist. Histrionic art he loved, but the power of mastering that essential restraint and tremendous condensation required of the playwright he could not achieve. The romantic temperament loves breadth, it is feverish in its activity; dramatic art perhaps demands always a tincture at least of classic calm and of classic simplification. The same criticism may likewise be applied to Byron. For a time he liked his position on the board of directors at Drury Lane, but "milord" was too fond of his own pleasures, was too far immersed in himself, to permit of any of that severer study which has been suggested above. The fact remains that even the attempts at drama made by those writers most enthusiastic in the cause of the theatre lacked the impress

of professionalism. Dickens' operatic farces are decidedly amateur, and the majority of Byron's dramas, in spite of Byron's own highly developed dramatic sense, are admittedly penned not for representation upon the stage but for leisured perusal in the study.

Through a combination of outward conditions and of inner failings, therefore—this must be our answer to the third question which we have proposed—the possibility of higher dramatic achievement was frustrated even among those who had the power of creating character, of projecting themselves into the minds of others. The outward conditions did undoubtedly mean much in this connection, but when Scott boldly declared "that the age has no reason to apprehend any decay of dramatic talent[1]," he displayed clearly that, like his companions, he had failed to grasp those genuine essentials on which "dramatic talent" must be founded, or without which "dramatic talent" cannot hope to succeed.

(4) We have now reached the fourth question proposed: Why did melodrama and the like flourish so freely in this age? Again the answer, which involves many of the explanations cited above, demands the careful consideration of a variety of movements in the time. In the first place, the superiority of the more literary authors was galling, and impertinence was challenged by impertinence. Some authors, fully conscious of the superior tone, remained openly unrepentant. Thus Reynolds tells us how the critics began to attack his mannerisms and his weak plots.

> Oh, ho, thought I, with Fielding when, on a first night, he heard one of his scenes hissed, "they have found me out, have they."...It is not *wholly* improbable that the above mentioned gentlemen had some grounds for their reproaches[2].

With a jest against himself, and a heart entirely unstricken by conscience, Reynolds turned gaily towards melodrama, finding that this type of play provided him with a new field for his energies while being at the same time infinitely easier to write. The reflection of the lordly affectations of the poets is to be seen in many another writer besides Reynolds. One

[1] *Essay on Drama, ed. cit.* vi. 380. [2] *Op. cit.* ii. 333.

of the raciest passages in the whole of Fitzball's memoirs is a satire on the pretensions of the proud. His imagination calls into being a manager of the Theatre Royal, Plumpton Marsh, who, having read the superior dramatic reviews, determines to come and save the London stage. He starts with *Magbeth*—pronounced *Mag* "ever since he heard of such a word being discovered, cut on a stone among the ruins of Macbeth's castle." This is followed by "the unfailing 'Lady of Lyons.'" The newspapers are a trifle cold, so he sends round invitations to "three of the most powerfully-writing editors."

> They, those awfully great men, all legitimitists, condescendingly sacrifice their time, as martyrs, ready to expire in a legitimate cause, and confidentially accept the invitation....At length, to come to business: Terence Beak, has condescendingly brought with him a legitimate tragedy, "Pope Pius," to be played without scenery. Mr Neverlaugh presents him with a screaming farce, called "A Cold Reception," entirely divested of frivolous play upon words, or vulgar practical jokes, till, at the conclusion, the comic man falls into a horsepond, off the stage, according to the strict rules of the classic drama. Mr Sheridan Bowles has a comedy for which he expects, (happy is the man, &c.,) £300 sterling. *This* comedy is all to be played seated *à la-Moliere*, and glorifies itself with the cheering title of the "Paralytic Stroke."... [Mr Plumpton] plays the first two of their immaculate inspirations, which, notwithstanding the heading of the bill in large *red*, un*read* letters—*Restoration of the Legitimate Drama*, are received thinly and coldly by discriminating but *select* audiences. But although his last *stroke*, the "Paralytic Stroke," is underlined, and places *kindly* advised to be taken early, from the apprehension of not obtaining any, luckless P., fortunately at all events for himself, this time escapes the paralytic stroke by the timely stroke of a writ, which cuts short, not only his anticipated triumph, and the gratitude of the million, but the *real legitimate drama* at the same time[1].

While all who have even the slightest acquaintance with the drama of the early nineteenth century must appreciate the fundamental distinction between the legitimate and the illegitimate, every sincere lover of the theatre must agree that

[1] *Op. cit.* ii. 110–16.

the superior tone adopted by the contemporary high-brows was both irritating and ill-calculated to serve the best interests of the playhouse, and further that the general level of the dramatic work produced by these mental aristocrats was not of a type to command respect. Fitzball's satire is perfectly merited, yet it is in a way pathetic, for it reveals poignantly the antagonism which kept the two parties so unfortunately apart. The same spirit is displayed in another manner in Bunn's work on *The Stage*. In his third volume he shows, and evidently with some authority, that the legitimatists, banded together in a fanatical company, disregarded entirely some of the more patent facts of the time. He records "the yell from the beauties, calling themselves Shaksperians" when he introduced a lion-show in a spectacular *Charlemagne*, and notes that

> In the blindness of their excitement they forgot that we had no Shakespearian actors alive, and that an attempt at the representation of any of the bard's immortalities would disgrace the theatre far more than any other performance. They forgot that *The Tempest*, performing at the other house with the announced quotation of "the text of Shakspeare," owed all the attraction it possessed to the novelty of Miss P. Horton, "My gentle Ariel," singing while suspended in the air[1].

If the antagonism between the legitimatists and the theatre writers was one of the main forces which drove the nineteenth century down a false path, it is hardly true to say that this cause stood alone. Indeed, we must assume once more that a series of concomitant circumstances all tended in the one direction. In attempting to assess the respective shares of responsibility, however, we must be careful to balance one statement and one fact with another. Thus an anonymous author in *The Dramatic Magazine* for 1829 comes to the decision that the failure is to be traced to the fact that

> Nine nights out of ten the galleries have complete command of the house, and, generally speaking, the applause proceeds from that part. Now we are well aware that a long sentence, or a declamatory dialogue, though written with all the inspiration

[1] iii. 98; see also iii. 21.

of a Milton, would not be received with attention by them. Thus it is that the productions of our modern authors are frequently overrun with nonsense, ribaldry, and rant[1].

At first sight, the complaint would appear to be perfectly just, yet we must counter this criticism by a paragraph in Fitzball's records in which he notes the effect of Osbaldistone's lowering of theatre prices. "It might be argued," remarks the dramatist, "that he reduced the mental audience also; yet I heard Kemble, say one night, as he came off the stage in Hamlet, that he never played to a more glorious one[2]." The audience undoubtedly had something to do with the dramatic Denmark's rotten state; so had the large theatres, and the actors, and the pantomime, and the musical show, and the high salaries and the delight in spectacle—but none of these can be brought forward by itself to account for the decline as a whole.

Among these contributory causes mentioned, however, there are not mentioned two which seem of prime importance, and which in a way serve to exonerate the theatre-writers from having to share a large part of the blame. Professor Watson has suggested in his study of stage conditions from Sheridan to Robertson that the drabness of the age accounts for much, and this suggestion seems to me among the most fruitful of the many adduced, both by him and by other critics. No genuine comedy or tragedy could rise out of the level greyness of early Victorian society. The poor were struggling harshly in a period of industrial change; the rich were duller than they had been in the Augustan days. In other literary realms Thackeray could only sneer at the pretensions of the aristocracy, and Dickens, in dealing with the mob, had to resort to false pathos and melodramatic effect. The melodrama of the period, then, was largely dependent upon the social circumstances of the period. If the melodrama was of the oriental romantic kind, then it was an escape from the sordid; if it was realistic in tendency, it was so tied and fettered by the conventionalities of the melodramatic condition that, in spite of its realistic tone, it

[1] p. 150. [2] ii. 116–17.

remained false to life. It was only when a wittier spirit arose in more aristocratic circles, and when the industrial chaos began to resolve itself, that a higher drama rose in England towards the end of the century.

The playwrights, feeling unconsciously the impossibility of devising dramatic material which should be in direct harmony with the spirit of the age, naturally turned abroad for inspiration. The German drama had run its course, and now Paris once more furnished a centre of attraction. In 1859 Fitzball found that the drama was "nearly almost all composed of translations[1]," and for decades before that date the French theatres had been ransacked for plots and situations. While adaptation has ruled for generations on the London stage, facts force us to admit that never before were so many foreign dramas reworked for English audiences. It was not only the difficulty of building plots out of the social life of the time which drove the playwrights to this wholesale imitation. Already we have noted the low remuneration for dramatic work[2], and it will at once be realised that any author who attempted to live by his pen was forced to turn out many more dramas than his predecessors had done. From 1818 to 1850 J. R. Planché produced over 150 plays, an average of five per year, while Fitzball's efforts seem almost incalculable. In earlier years, thought "D.G.," the introducer to Cumberland's set of plays, "relieved by the curious and uncommon performance of" rope-dancers and similar entertainers,

> a pantomime and a brace of burlettas were quite sufficient to carry a minor season through triumphantly. But now, "another and another still succeed," till their very names become a tax on our recollection[3].

This frenzied activity was, as we have seen, due to hard necessity, the poor rewards for dramatic work encouraging the production of quantity rather than quality. Some conception of the vast number of new pieces produced annually may be gained from contemplation of the fact that had any

[1] *Op. cit.* i. i.
[2] See *supra*, pp. 51–3.
[3] Introduction to Campbell's *The Forest Oracle* (S.W. 1829).

newspaper wished to cover all the Easter productions played for the first time on Monday, April 4, 1831 (and this year is taken at random), it would have had to send representatives to nine theatres and to criticise no less than sixteen new dramas. The very length of the appendix provided to this study indicates, too, the enormous quantity of farce, melodrama, opera and pantomime introduced with ever-changing bills at both the "majors" and the "minors."

Careless workmanship and stolen plots were the more obvious results. The stolen plots, of course, came not only from France; Scott was a "mighty luminary which reflected its lustre upon the so-called illegitimate drama[1]." As will be seen[2], his novels were eagerly adapted by scores of needy authors, and performances of these dramatisations dominate the bills for many a season. Unfortunately Scott's themes, like so many of Dickens', are almost entirely melodramatic. A villainous Osbaldistone, a generous hero, a noble heroine, a high-souled brigand in Rob Roy, single combats, gloomy scenes, thrills, humour, ambuscades, escape—such a combination was well calculated to appeal to the age, and, at the same time, to hammer tighter yet the fetters of the melodramatic tradition.

The practice of adaptation from the French play or from the English novel did not demand the highest of talents, and we find expressed in this time what is a kind of reflex influence or subsidiary result in the realm of dramatic authorship. Thus Terry, in the Advertisements to his own and Pocock's rendering of *The Antiquary* (C.G. 1820), confesses that

> The task of compressing Tales of three volumes into Plays of three Acts, is one of merely technical and mechanical drudgery, which no one would willingly undertake who could do better things; and he who performs it must be content to resign the title of *Author*, for the humbler but juster appellation of *Compiler*.

With this feeling, or with that of opposition as expressed by Fitzball, there could hardly be any advance in dramatic literature; the theatre had fallen on stony paths and no

[1] Fitzball, *op. cit.* i. iv.

[2] *Infra*, pp. 92–5.

one body of men had the sagacity or the power to help it over the roughs; on all sides is a pathetic and at times almost ridiculous acceptance of the facts and a weary reiteration of "these degenerate-dramatic days[1]."

II. *General Influences on the Drama*, 1800–1850

From the rapid survey of dramatic development given in the preceding chapter, it is evident that serious drama in this age was sharply divided into three sections. The first comprised the unacted poetic plays and those not intended for the stage; the second included the poetic dramas which secured performance in the theatre; while the third was the section of melodrama. To a certain extent the first and second groups may be considered together, but here, since we are studying dramatic development from the point of view of the theatre, they must be separated. It will also be realised at once that the poetic drama section is much smaller than the melodramatic. A manager is "a very great fool" if he thinks "tragedy is likely to obtain Success, now-a-days," at least according to Planché[2]. Tragic writing, deems Bucke, is "an ART, which the world is unanimous in believing is almost totally extinct[3]." The host of melodrama, led by ghostly spirits and stock-heroes, had wellnigh vanquished the enfeebled armies of the tragic muse.

In view of this sharp division into two types, it is obvious that we cannot hope to trace in detail common influences on the serious drama of the time, yet the two types are not so fundamentally severed as to preclude the possibility of a certain harmony of atmosphere and even of aim. The poetic authors, in spite of their lordly air of superiority, were not above

[1] See T. Dibdin's *Harlequin Hoax* (Lyc. 1814), scene v. In the above account I have used only a small section of the various species of periodical and pamphlet literature bearing on the dramatic decline of the age. What I have taken is, however, thoroughly representative, and naturally has been chosen for its typical qualities. Among the other works special attention might be devoted to the prejudiced but well-written article by "Philo-Dramaticus" (the Rev. W. Harness) in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1825.

[2] *Success* (Adel. 1825).

[3] *The Italians* (D.L. 1819), preface.

indulging in the tricks of the inferior style. The *Alfred the Great* (D.L. 1831) of Sheridan Knowles is very little but a self-conscious melodrama, while Talfourd's *Glencoe* (H.[2] 1840), although it has not the regular stock characters, shows in its general atmosphere a certain kinship with the melodramatic type. It has been pointed out[1] that even Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* has a structure not far different from that accorded to the majority of melodramas. Both species at times veered close to one another and showed spirits which were to all intents the same.

The serious drama of the early nineteenth century is fundamentally a regular development of the drama of 1780–1800. Already the melodramatic characters had been created; already the poetic authors were rushing their unactable wares to the press; already attempts were being made in the direction of a "romantic" style. All that this half-century achieved was the establishing of melodrama as a formal type, the elaboration of some special themes untouched before and the more definite introduction of the poetic play. To insist on merely terminological differences is purely pedantic, so that, while we may note that certain names, such as that of melodrama itself, are of nineteenth century origin, we must not assume that the appearance of a certain type in the period was without its premonitions in the late eighteenth century. Nor must we make too much of foreign influence, even when we note the enormous activity in adaptation which marks out the age dramatically. Leigh Hunt was not far wrong in finding Goldsmith ultimately responsible for the farce of his own times[2], and even the melodrama was as much English as Continental.

French influence, of course, and that far more widespread than in any preceding age, cannot be denied or neglected. Fully one-half of the plays written between 1800 and 1850 must have been suggested by Parisian models, and many were literally adapted by English authors. To attempt any

[1] Unpublished thesis by U. C. Nagchaudhuri, in the University of London.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 54.

analysis of that influence would obviously be impossible here[1], but a few notes may not be inopportune regarding several outstanding tendencies. At the very start, we observe that the more vital efforts of the French stage made but little impression on English playwrights. To all intents Victor Hugo passed unnoticed in this age[2]. It is certainly true that *Hernani* (1830) was translated by Lord Leveson Gower and presented privately before the Royal Family at Bridgewater House in June 1831, and that two months earlier a version by Kenney had appeared on the boards of Drury Lane. It is also true that others of his dramas saw English translation or adaptation during this period—notably *Angelo* (1835), presented at the Vic. shortly after its appearance in Paris (*Angelo*, June 1835), *Le roi s'amuse* (1832) which was given by Burton as *The Court Fool* at the Royal Pavilion in August 1833, *Marie Tudor* (1833) which was staged as *Queen Mary* at the Adelphi in Nov. 1840[3], and *Lucrèce Borgia* (1833) which was translated by J. M. Weston in 1843 and in 1847 re-translated by William Young. The fact, however, remains that the plays of Hugo roused no such critical controversy as they did in France, and that with them the works of the greater French writers were fundamentally neglected. Typical of the un-understanding English attitude of this time is the critique of Lytton's *The Duchess de la Vallière* (C.G. 1837) in *The Gentleman's Magazine*[4]. This play is there condemned as being "after the unwholesome fashion of the modern French dramatic school,—vide Dumas, Hugo, &c." The explanation of this attitude, of course, is to be found in the facts that the more talented authors were too deeply immersed in their Elizabethan dramatists, while the theatre-writers sought, not

[1] Indications are given in Appendix B of sources where these are known. While I have added a few notes culled from my own reading, it must be realised that, with a subject so vast, nothing in the way of exhaustive "research" into foreign origins could have been attempted in this work.

[2] On this subject see the interesting essay of Victor E. A. Bowley on *English Versions of Victor Hugo's Plays* in *The French Quarterly* (x. 2, June 1928).

[3] This version also made use of Harrison Ainsworth's *The Tower of London*; see Bowley, *op. cit.* p. 97.

[4] 1837, i. 421.

for a new way of art, but for that which, being familiar, could hardly fail to make an appeal. As we have already seen, the majority of these theatre-writers were unrepentant. They wrote plays, as a cobbler makes shoes, for the purpose of bringing in a few pence or a few pounds, and consequently they sought in Paris, not for what was new and vital, but for what was old and sure to please. At first sight, this statement may appear to be contradicted by the fact that, in 1802, Holcroft adapted as *A Tale of Mystery* Guilbert de Pixérécourt's *Cœlina, ou l'enfant du mystère* (Paris, 1800), which is generally regarded as the first melodrama proper. As I have shown elsewhere[1], however, the contradiction is only apparent, for the formal "melodrama" of the nineteenth century merely marks the culmination of a movement which had been rapidly gathering power between 1790 and 1800. In other words, Holcroft recognised in Pixérécourt's work, not so much a new type of dramatic art, as a perfection of that which he himself, Morton and a dozen others had been blunderingly aiming at for over a decade. Holcroft knew, from experience, that Pixérécourt would be popular in London. And popular he was, giving fresh impetus to the tendency towards type characterisation, thrilling plot, contrast of dark villainy and purest innocence, helping to establish definitely on the English stage all the tricks and devices of the melodramatic style. We can see how eagerly he was followed, but from no adaptation of his work do we get a sense of a novel spirit or of a hitherto teuntried ndency.

In dealing with Pixérécourt, it may not be inopportune here to outline such versions of his plays as I have been able to trace, since he and Scribe may be taken as typical contemporary French authors and the record of adaptation may be regarded as representative of similar activity in different spheres. After *Cœlina*, *Le pèlerin blanc, ou les orphelins du hameau* (Paris, 1801) was Pixérécourt's next complete melodramatic experiment, and this appeared in an English dress as *The Wandering Boys* (S.W. 1830) by Kerr.

[1] *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 97–107. On Pixérécourt and the *mélodrame* the works cited there should be consulted.

Thereafter many of his works were eagerly seized upon. *L'homme à trois visages, ou le proscrit de Venise* (Paris, 1801) provided four English plays[1], while *La femme à deux maris* (Paris, 1802) gave another three[2]. *Les mines de Pologne* (Paris, 1803) was the basis of the anonymous *The Mines of Poland* (Royalty, 1822), *Tékéli, ou le siège de Montgatz* (Paris, 1803) appeared in Hook's rendering as *Tekeli* (D.L. 1806), while *Les maures d'Espagne* (Paris, 1804) suggested *The Moors of Spain* acted at Sadler's Wells in 1841. Hook returned to Pixérécourt when he wrote *The Fortress* (H.[2] 1807), which is taken from *La forteresse du Danube* (Paris, 1805). Apparently *Robinson Crusoé* (Paris, 1805) provided suggestions for an anonymous *Robinson Crusoe* (Olym. 1842) and for Pocock's drama of the same title (C.G. 1817). *Le chien de Montargis, ou la forêt de Bondy* (Paris, 1814) was twice rendered[3], and *Charles-le-Téméraire, ou le siège de Nancy* (Paris, 1814) four times[4]. Dibdin took *La chapelle des bois, ou le témoin invisible* (Paris, 1818) as the model for *The Invisible Witness* (R.C. 1818), *Le Belvéder, ou, la vallée de l'Etna* (Paris, 1818) was given as *Le Belvéder* at the Surrey in 1831, while the same theatre in 1822 presented a rendering of *Le Mont Sauvage, ou le duc de Bourgogne* (Paris, 1821)[5]. *Valentine, ou la séduction* (Paris, 1821) was adapted by Ebsworth[6] and Payne[7], *Le château de Loch-Leven* (Paris, 1822) became *Mary Stuart; or, The Castle of Lochlevin* (R.P. 1839), and *La peste de Marseille* (Paris, 1828) was translated thrice[8]. Lastly may be

[1] Elliston's *The Venetian Outlaw* (D.L. 1805), Lewis' *Rugantino* (C.G. 1805), Powell's *The Venetian Outlaw* (1805) and an anonymous *Rugantino* (Surrey, 1831).

[2] Cobb's *The Wife of Two Husbands* (D.L. 1803), an anonymous *A Wife with Two Husbands* (1803), and another of the same title (1803) by E. Gunning.

[3] Barrymore's *The Dog of Montargis* (C.G. 1814) and Dibdin's play of the same title (R.C. 1814).

[4] Three anonymous versions as *Charles the Terrible* (W.L. 1821; Cob. 1830; Surrey, 1837) and one by Arnold, *Charles the Bold* (D.L. 1815).

[5] As *The Solitary of Mount Savage.*

[6] *Adelaide; or, The Fatal Seduction* (Cob. 1822).

[7] *Adeline; or, The Victim of Seduction* (D.L. 1822).

[8] Two anonymous plays called *The Plague of Marseilles* (Cob. 1828 S.W. 1828) and Moncrieff's *The Pestilence of Marseilles* (Surrey, 1829).

cited Fitzball's *Ondine* (Queen's, 1843), derived from *Ondine, ou la nymphe des eaux* (Paris, 1830).

It is evident here that Pixérécourt's influence is by no means unimportant, but one must again emphasise the comparative lack of novelty in choice and in treatment of theme to be found in his work. The same is true of other forms of dramatic art taken from France, and at this point we may consider in brief survey the adaptations of the plays written by the popular dramatist Eugène Scribe. Of his plays it is fairly easy to trace adaptations of at least the more popular and better known. One drama (*Les diamants de la couronne*, written in collaboration with de Saint-Georges and with music by Auber, Paris, 1841) saw no less than six English versions[1], while five adaptations each were accorded to four plays—*La muette de Portici* (with Delavigne and Auber, Paris, 1828)[2], *La Juive* (with music by Halévy, Paris, 1835)[3], *Robert le Diable* (with Delavigne and Meyerbeer, Paris, 1831)[4], and *Le domino noir* (with music by Auber, Paris, 1837)[5]. Four plays were given three English versions—*Les Huguenots* (with music by Meyerbeer, Paris, 1836)[6], *Le cheval de bronze* (with music by Auber, Paris, 1835)[7], *La sirène* (Paris, 1844)[8],

[1] *Catarina; or, The False Jewels* (Strand, 1844), *Catarina; or, The Crown Jewels* (Vic. 1844), *The Crown Brilliants* (Grecian, 1846), *The Crown Diamonds* (Yarmouth, 1847), *The Crown Diamonds* (P'cess, 1844) and Fitzball's *The Crown Jewels* (D.L. 1846).

[2] Levius' *Masaniello* (D.L. 1829), an anonymous *Masaniello* (R.A. 1829), a ballet based on the story (H.[I] 1829), Milner's *Masaniello* (Cob. 1829) and Kenney's *Masaniello* (C.G. 1849).

[3] As *The Jewess*—Moncrieff's (Vic. 1835), anonymous (R.P. 1835), Planché's (D.L. 1835), Burroughs' (Edinburgh, 1836), anonymous (Queen's, 1844).

[4] *The Demon Duke* (D.L. 1832), *The Demon Father* (R.P. 1832), *The Fiend Father* (C.G. 1832), *Robert le Diable* (S.W. 1832), Fitzball's *Robert le Diable* (Adel. 1832).

[5] Wilks' *The Black Domino* (S.W. 1838), Mathews' *The Black Domino* (Olym. 1838), two anonymous plays of the same title (St J. 1838 and C.G. 1838), *Le domino noir* (D.L. 1846).

[6] Three anonymous plays, *The Huguenots* (E.O.H. 1836; C.G. 1845; Surrey, 1849).

[7] Fitzball's *The Bronze Horse* (C.G. 1835), an anonymous play (R.A. 1835) and Bunn's *The Bronze Horse* (D.L. 1836).

[8] Bunn's *The Syren* (D.L. 1844) and two anonymous plays (P'cess, 1844, and the Eagle, 1846).

and *La somnambule* (Paris, 1819)[1], and seven others reached two separate renderings—*La neige* (with Delavigne, Paris, 1823)[2], *La dame blanche* (with music by Boieldieu, Paris, 1825)[3], *La fiancée* (with music by Auber, Paris, 1829)[4], *Lestocq* (with music by Auber, Paris, 1834)[5], *L'ambassadrice* (with de Saint-Georges, Paris, 1836)[6], *Haydée, ou le secret* (Paris, 1847)[7], and *Michel et Christine* (Paris, 1821)[8]. Besides these, fully fifteen plays by Scribe appeared, either in directly translated or in adapted forms, on the English stage—*Valérie* (Paris, 1822)[9], *Bertrand et Raton* (Paris, 1833)[10], *Une chaine* (Paris, 1841)[11], *Le philtre* (Paris, 1831)[12], *Le prophète* (Paris, 1849)[13], *La part du diable* (with music by Auber, Paris, 1843)[14], *Une visite à Bedlam* (Paris, 1818)[15], *Rodolphe, ou frère et sœur* (Paris, 1823)[16], *La demoiselle à marier* (Paris, 1826)[17], *La belle-mère* (Paris, 1826)[18], *L'oncle d'Amérique* (Paris, 1826)[19], *L'ambassadeur* (Paris, 1826)[20], *Le mariage de raison* (Paris, 1826)[21], *Louise, ou la réparation* (Paris, 1829)[22], and *Une faute* (Paris, 1830)[23].

[1] An anonymous *Love's Dream* (E.O.H. 1820), Beazley's *La Somnambula* (D.L. 1833), Moncrieff's *The Somnambulist* (C.G. 1828).
[2] Planché's *The Frozen Lake* (E.O.H. 1824), *The Frozen Lake* (C.G. 1824).
[3] Payne's *The White Maid* (C.G. 1827), *The White Lady* (D.L. 1826).
[4] *The Husband's Mistake* (C.G. 1830), Planché's *The National Guard* (D.L. 1830).
[5] Macfarren's *Lestocq* (C.G. 1835), Moncrieff's *Lestocq* (Vic. 1835).
[6] À Beckett's *The Ambassadress* (St J. 1838), *The Ambassadress* (Grecian, 1848).
[7] *Haydee* (Strand, 1848), *Haydee* (C.G. 1848).
[8] *Michael and Christine* (S.W. 1849), *Love in Humble Life* (D.L. 1822).
[9] *Valeria* (H.² 1828).
[10] Bunn's *The Minister and the Mercer* (D.L. 1834).
[11] Rodwell's *The Breach of Promise of Marriage* (Adel. 1842).
[12] Planché's *The Love Charm* (D.L. 1831).
[13] Fitzball's *The Prophet* (R.A. 1849).
[14] Archer's *Asmodeus, the little Demon* (Surrey, 1843).
[15] Morton's *A Rowland for an Oliver* (C.G. 1819).
[16] Lacy's *The Two Friends* (H.² 1828).
[17] Planché's *A Daughter to Marry* (H.² 1828).
[18] Lacy's *The Stepmother* (C.G. 1828).
[19] Jerrold's *A Nabob for an Hour* (C.G. 1833).
[20] Planché's *Manœuvring* (H.² 1829).
[21] *The Marriage of Reason* (H.² 1844).
[22] Bernard's *Louise* (H.² 1843).
[23] Moncrieff's *The One Fault* (City, 1831).

This bare list of adaptations[1], which could certainly be supplemented, seems to show a deep indebtedness to the French writer's works, but in reality Scribe brought nothing thoroughly new to the theatre. He is a perfecter in style and construction rather than an innovator and an inventor. Even the vaudevilles, the revues and the fairy extravaganzas which seem so characteristically French were not so very far removed from the burlesques and the burlettas of eighteenth century England. I should by no means wish to deny the widespread Gallic influence on the dramatic work of these years, but, while admitting that influence, I should desire to stress the fact that, after all, the main theatrical movements in the period are to be traced back to the tendencies of preceding years.

It has been remarked that the French almost completely supplanted the German drama in the minds and hearts of English dramatists. In 1799 the publishers were frenziedly turning out their innumerable editions of Kotzebue and Schiller; by 1819 these editions were no doubt littering the cheaper second-hand bookstalls. Attempts were still made to furnish new renderings of the greater German masterpieces; volumes of collected works of men such as Goethe and Schiller were issued by the larger publishers[2]; but apparently

[1] It must be insisted that only such versions are cited here as have been noted from my own reading of Scribe. A detailed search would no doubt show that nearly all his plays had appeared on the English stage. The order of the French plays given above follows that in the *Théâtre de Eugène Scribe* (Paris, 1856–7, 18 vols.).

[2] B. Q. Morgan in his *Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation* [University of Wisconsin Studies, xvi. 1922] essays to cover the whole of this activity. The following works deal with the early nineteenth century: W. F. Hanhart, *The Reception of Goethe's Faust in England in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (N.Y., 1909); J. M. Carré, *Goethe en Angleterre* (Paris, 1920); Lina Baumann, *Die englischen Übersetzungen von Goethes Faust* (Halle, 1907); F. W. C. Lieder, *Goethe in England and America* (*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, x. 1911); J. G. Robertson, *Goethe and Byron* (*Publ. of the English Goethe Society*, N.S., ii. 1925); W. Heinemann, *Goethes Faust in England und Amerika* (Berlin, 1886); E. Oswald, *Goethe in England and America, A Bibliography* (1909); J. Tait, *The Literary Influence of Goethe's Faust in England, 1832–1852* (*Trans. of the Manchester Goethe Society*, 1894); W. Macintosh, *Scott and Goethe* (1925); T. Rea, *Schiller's Poems and Dramas in England* (1906); C. Sachs, *Schillers Beziehungen zur englischen Literatur* (*Archiv*,

that wellnigh universal interest which had characterised the last years of the eighteenth century had almost completely vanished. Editions of Benjamin Thompson's *The German Theatre*[1] continued to appear; individual enthusiasts still worked at new versions of the plays of Schiller and of Goethe[2];

xxx. 1861); H. F. G. Roscher, *Die Wallensteinübersetzung von S. T. Coleridge* (1905); M. W. Cooke, *Schiller's Robbers in England* (*Modern Language Review*, xi. 2. April 1916); L. A. Willoughby, introduction to edition of *Die Räuber* (Oxford, 1922); Sprague Allen, *Analogues of Wordsworth's "The Borderers"* (*Publ. of the Modern Language Association of America*, xxxviii. 2, 1923); M. J. Herzberg, *Wordsworth and German Literature* (*id.* xl. 2, 1925); W. Sellier, *Kotzebue in England* (Leipzig, 1901); L. Bahlsen, *Kotzebues Peru-Dramen und Sheridans Pizarro* (*Archiv*, lxxxi. 1893); F. Koeppel, *Kotzebue in England* (*Englische Studien*, xiii. 1891); J. E. Gillet, *A Forgotten German Creditor of the English Stage* (*Nineteenth Century*, April 1912); W. Todt, *Lessing in England* (Heidelberg, 1912); S. H. Kenwood, *Lessing in England* (*Modern Language Review*, 1914); K. Blumenhagen, *Sir Walter Scott als Übersetzer* (Rostock, 1900); T. Zeiger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutsch-englischen Literaturbeziehungen* (*Studien zur vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte*, i. 1901); F. W. Stokoe, *German Influence in the English Romantic Period 1788–1818* (1926).

[1] See Hand-list, Appendix B.

[2] *Faust* and *Don Carlos* seem to have proved particularly attractive to translators. For the former see Appendix B under Talbot (1835), Syme (1834), Swanwick (1849), Macdonald (1838), Lefevre (1841), Knox (1847), Hills (1839), Hayward (1833), Gurney (1842), Gower (1823), Filmore (1841), Blackie (1834), Birch (1839), Bernays (1839), Soane (1820), Anster (1835), Duckett (1845). Three anonymous versions appeared in 1821, 1834 and 1838. *Faustus* was presented at the Coburg in 1824; another adaptation (by Soane and Terry) appeared at Drury Lane in 1825; and a third (by Grattan) at Sadler's Wells in 1842. As an opera it was given at H.[I] in 1842. *Don Carlos* was translated by Towler (1843), Cottrell (1843), Bruce (1837), Russell (1822, acted at Surrey, 1848). As an opera it was produced (libretto by Tarantini) at H.[I] in 1844. Here may be noted Thompson's (1804) and Shoberl's (1804) renderings of Goethe's *Stella*, as well as a series of versions of Schiller's works. *Die Braut von Messina* (1803) was Englished by Irvine (1837), Lockwood (1839) and Lodge (1841); Knowles' play appeared at Covent Garden in 1840. Crescini has a *Brigands* (1836) from *Die Räuber*. An anonymous translation of *Fiesko* was issued in 1841, while Daguilar (1832) produced another. *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (1802) was rendered by Bethune (1835), Egertorff (1836), Lucas (1841), Turner (1842), Swanwick (1843) and Thompson (1845). *Maria Stuart* (1801) was translated by Mellish (1801), Salvin (1824), Trelawney (1838), Percival (1839) and Peter (1841). An anonymous version was published in 1833, and a *Mary Stuart* play based on Schiller's appeared at Covent Garden in 1819. Coleridge's *The Piccolomini* (1800) is well known; another anonymous translation was issued in 1805 and Moir's in 1827. *Wilhelm Tell* was also popular among translators—Grosett (1812), Robinson (1825), Roche (1808), Vœux (1827), Talbot (1829), Banfield (1831), Peter (1839), Thompson (1845) and

Die Räuber and other dramas kept some of their inspiration for poetic dramatists; Kotzebue still held for a few some charm[1]; a German theatre ran for a whole season in London[2]; but for the theatre as a whole, save for a few exceptions, the German drama exerted but little direct influence. The many translations may have given pleasure to those poetically inclined, but it will be noted that, in the lists given above, only one or two plays actually found an English stage dress. There are, however, the exceptions. The first comprises the German operas. Händel had worked in England during the eighteenth century, but Händel's efforts had been all in the direction of the Italian style. Now for the first time the beauties of opera in German came to charm English audiences; Mozart and Beethoven appeared at the Haymarket, at Drury Lane and at the Princess's with both original German and adapted English libretti. This movement was not without its influence upon the London stage, for in this age of melodrama and of musical comedy there was but a slight line of demarcation between the purely dramatic and the purely operatic. The second exception includes a few melodramatic works, over which there arose tremendous furore in certain years of this period. Typical of these is Kind's *Der Freischütz*, with Weber's music, which startled and thrilled the town in the year 1824. Of this play at least five adaptations appeared in that season[3], while within a few months of the original

Molini (1846). A *William Tell* appeared at the Coburg in 1821. There may be noted also Clarke's *Ravenna* (C.G. 1824), based on *Kabale und Liebe*, and the anonymous translation of *Wallenstein* (1799 and 1800).

[1] The following may be noted: *Alfred and Emma* (1806) from *Die Kreuzfahrer*; Kenney's *Benyowsky* (D.L. 1826) from *Graf Benjowsky*; *The Confusion* (1842) from *Der Wirrwarr*, which also gave *All in Confusion* (German, 1806); Siber's *The Female Jacobin-Club* (1801) from *Der weibliche Jacobiner-Clubb*; *How to Die for Love* (Lyc. 1812); Cumberland's *Joanna of Montfaucon* (C.G. 1800); Kemble's *Kamtchatka* (C.G. 1811); *Kindred* (1837) from *Die Verwandtschaften*; Capadose's *The Organs of the Brain* (1838) from *Die Organe des Gehirns*; Shoberl's *The Patriot Father* (1830) from *Die Hussiten*; Kemble's *The Wanderer* (C.G. 1808) from *Eduard in Schottland*; Reynolds' *The Virgin of the Sun* (C.G. 1812) and an anonymous *Virgin of the Sun* (Norwich, 1815) from *Die Sonnen-Jungfrau*.

[2] See Appendix A.

[3] Soane's (D.L. 1824), Oxenford's (E.O.H. 1824), Fitzball's (Surrey, 1824), Planché's (C.G. 1824), Amherst's (R.A. 1824).

productions "Septimus Globus" had issued a *Freischütz Travestie* and the Olympic had staged a regular burlesque. The following year appeared another burlesque, *Der Fryshot*, at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, to be followed by a fourth at the Adelphi in 1828. The original German libretto was played at the Haymarket in 1832. Such isolated examples, however, cannot be used to prove any widespread interest, such as existed from 1790 to 1800, in the German drama. The explanation of this neglect, no doubt, is to be traced in that moral mood which had greeted the earliest translations in the preceding age[1]. During the first decades of the nineteenth century this moral mood was growing in intensity and its decorousness would by no means accept either the problems presented by Kotzebue or the daring of Schiller. There is, of course, nothing exceptional here, for Ibsen was denied fifty years later, and only yesterday Strindberg, Toller and Hauptmann were looked on askance. One peculiarity of the English stage is that it is always accepting at a late date other people's forgotten and outworn ideas. It assumes that fresh and novel ideas originated abroad must of necessity be subversive of morality. It is not strange, therefore, that Schiller and the other German dramatists were in the early nineteenth century recognised in the main only by a few literary enthusiasts.

One great characteristic of this time is, of course, the interest in Elizabethan literature. Something has been said on this subject above, but the theme requires at least a few additional notes. This was the period when the long-buried works of the minor Elizabethans were unearthed; this, too, was the period when the criticism of Coleridge, Schlegel, Hazlitt and a host of others revealed a profundity in Shakespeare which had hardly been felt before. It is true that Shakespeare had never been for one moment forgotten in the eighteenth century, either by managers or by *littérateurs*, but rarely did the Augustans divine the psychological depth in Shakespeare discovered in the later age and comparatively rarely did the dramatists seek to imitate his works. Now,

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 121–2.

it seemed as if a whole Eldorado of poetic gold had been revealed to the poets, and they, like the adventurers of old, hesitated not to make free use of the treasures poured in front of them. The poetic dramas of the time are literally filled with Shakespearian and Elizabethan imagery. Often does Patience sit melancholy upon a monument; often do characters look in a moved sort as if they were dismayed. This wholesale borrowing is accompanied by slavish imitation of plot and character; the real gold is frequently set in a framework of tinsel. Many dramatists, "thouing" through five acts, seem physically incapable of penning a "you." Blank verse unimaginatively follows the cadences of a Shakespeare or a Fletcher. Iagos subtly insinuate their way on to the stage, and Rosalinds lisp in quivering Forests of Arden.

Clearly, such universal imitation can lead to nothing that is original, for every age, however fully it may be conscious of the beauties and the virtues of the past, must work out its own methods, its own language, its own characters and its own aim. The theme of our later survey of the poetic drama must be once more the failure of the dramatists to escape from the trammels of this Elizabethan idolisation. It is not too much to say that Shakespeare cast a blight upon the would-be higher drama of the time. Nor, in dealing with this subject, must we forget that the knowledge of the Elizabethans was by no means confined to the contemporary men of letters. Shakespeare, as has been seen, gained a new lease of life owing to the spectacular tendencies of the age[1], and of the minor Elizabethan writers there were many interesting revivals during the half-century. The audiences, therefore, had ample opportunities for hearing the works of the Immortal Bard, and the habit of playing Shakespeare against Shakespeare, of presenting the same plays with different casts or at least with changes of star-performers, undoubtedly led towards an added attention paid to the actual words spoken in the theatres. Typical examples of the extent of this interest in the earlier plays may be found in Planché's extravaganzas and burlesques. Many of these

[1] See *supra*, p. 41.

depend for their very existence upon the recognition by the audience of the Shakespearian phrases which he has cleverly interwoven into his own dialogue. Few playgoers of today could immediately distinguish the allusions, yet we must suppose that Planché's contemporaries found no difficulty in doing so. The success of his pieces seems to testify to that. Testimony, too, comes from *The Theatrical Repertory* and from Colman the younger. A protest in the former, against the operatic version of *The Tempest*[1], shows what close attention was being paid to the original text, while the latter definitely states that everyone is "perfectly aware...that a modern audience would not allow of any further meddling with the text of Shakespeare[2]." This statement, however, must be qualified so as to make it apply only to the major theatres, for the minors early discovered that Shakespeare had in him the stuff of which excellent "burlettas" and melodramas are made. It would be impossible to give a full list of such versions here, but we may note at least a few selected examples. As a burletta *Antony and Cleopatra* appeared at the Surrey in 1810. *The Battle of Bosworth Field* (Cob. 1827) is simply *Richard III*[3]. *Julius Cæsar* became a melodrama at the East London in 1818, while at the Royalty in 1812 appeared a burletta of *King Lear and his Three Daughters*. A melodrama, *The Life and Death of King Richard II; or, Wat Tyler and Jack Straw* (R.A. 1834), was indebted partly to Shakespeare, while *Romeo and Juliet* was a melodrama at the Surrey in 1813. Another melodrama called *The Royal Dane* (Surrey, 1827) is only *Hamlet* adapted. These pieces were obviously successful, as is indirectly attested by the extraordinary number of Shakespearian burlesques and travesties which this age produced[4]. *King "Leer"* was given at the Bower Saloon in 1848, while

[1] No. VIII. Saturday, Nov. 7, 1801.

[2] R. B. Peake, *op. cit.* ii. 434.

[3] Cf. *King Richard III and the Battle of Bosworth Field* (Royalty, 1812), and *The Life and Death of King Richard III; or, The Battle of Bosworth Field* (Surrey, 1813).

[4] See R. Farquharson Sharp, *Travesties of Shakespeare's Plays* (*The Library*, I. i, June 1920). A number of those cited here have not hitherto been noted.

a *King Lear and his Daughters Queer* was printed in 1830. Selby's *King Richard ye Third; or, ye Battel of Bosworth Field* (Strand, 1844) has clearly the melodramatic adaptations in view. There are many travesties of *Macbeth*[1] and *Othello*[2] and *Romeo*[3]. Here may be mentioned, too, C. Dibdin's *Anthony, Cleopatra and Harlequin* (S.W. 1804). In surveying the interest in Shakespeare taken by the people of this period two other things are to be observed. The first is a tendency to translate, as it were, the Shakespearian characters into terms of everyday existence. Moncrieff's *The Lear of Private Life* (Cob. 1820) and *The Othello of Private Life* (C.L. 1849) may serve as examples. It is interesting to note that Turgeniev's experiment has thus been anticipated in the early nineteenth century stage. The other concerns the numerous plays dealing with episodes in Shakespeare's life. Somerset's *Shakespeare's Early Days* (C.G. 1829), *Shakespeare and Burbage* (Strand, 1838), and *Shakespeare's Dream* (Edinburgh, 1831) show clearly a new interest in the playwright as an individual, while such pieces as Moncrieff's *Shakespeare's Festival* (Surrey, 1830) and C. Dibdin's *Shakespeare versus Harlequin* (D.L. 1820)[4] may be noted to add yet fresh weight of evidence proving the widespread interest taken by both majors and minors in the plays of the "Bard of Avon."

Alongside of this revived interest in things Elizabethan must be chronicled the interest in the contemporary novel. Fiction was rapidly becoming a dominant form of literature, and the minor dramatists found here in plenty that for which they were seeking—plots, characters and dialogues ready formed, the *scenario* (and more than the *scenario*) on which they could base their hastily written plays. The dramatisation of novels had begun in the latter half of the preceding century[5], but it was not until the time of Scott that the whole field of fiction

[1] Talfourd's (Oxford, 1850), Bell's (1838), an anonymous *Macbeth Travestie* (1813) and another (Strand, 1842).
[2] Anonymous (1813), Dowling's (Liverpool, 1834).
[3] Dowling's (1837), Gurney's (1812), anonymous (Edinburgh, 1841).
[4] Adapted from Garrick's *Harlequin's Invasion*.
[5] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 71–2.

was eagerly and systematically ransacked[1]. In the Waverley Novels the playwrights found that there was for them as for the original author a mint of money. Even before the appearance of *Waverley*, Scott's work had attracted theatrical attention. The poetical romances were soon seized upon by one after another of the needy dramatists. *The Lady of the Lake*[2], *Marmion*[3], *Rokeby*[4], *The Bridal of Triermain*[5], *The Rose of Ettrick Vale*[6], and *The Lord of the Isles*[7], all appeared on the English stage, while a version of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, as *Border Feuds*, was published in Dublin in 1811. Of the novels, *Rob Roy* most surely captured the hearts of contemporaries. By January 1818 an anonymous version was being given at the Pantheon Theatre, Edinburgh; on February 16 of the same year was produced another at the Olympic; Pocock's rendering appeared at Covent Garden on March 12, and was followed a fortnight later by Soane's at Drury Lane; in June, Murray of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, brought out a revised text of the Covent Garden production. Thereafter, with minor changes in the various versions, *Rob Roy*

[1] H. A. White has an essay on *Sir Walter Scott's Novels on the Stage* (Yale University Press, 1927). This is a good survey of the subject, but it omits many of the versions and has no indication of the printed texts.

[2] See in the Hand-list of Plays appended to this survey. T. J. Dibdin's *The Lady of the Lake* (Surrey, 1810), E. J. Eyre's *The Lady of the Lake* (Edinburgh, 1811), T. Morton's *The Knight of Snowdoun* (C.G. 1811), as well as *The Lady of the Lake* (D.L. 1827), *The Knight of Snowdoun* (E.O.H. 1823), *The Lady of the Lake* (C.G. 1843) and Tully's *The Lady of the Lake* (Strand, 1843), all taken from Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* presented at Naples in 1819 and performed in Italian at the Haymarket in 1823.

[3] See under Unknown Authors, *Marmion* (New, 1810), *Marmion; or, The Battle of Flodden Field* (Norwich, 1811), and Macready (Newcastle, 1814), S. Kemble (D.L. 1818), Fitzball (R.A. 1848). C. Dibdin's *The Spectre Knight* (S.W. 1810) is from the same source.

[4] Macready's version appeared at Newcastle in 1814 and Thompson printed another the same year.

[5] An operetta, *Triermain*, by Ellerton appeared in 1831, and Pocock's *King Arthur* at Drury Lane in 1834.

[6] Murray's version came out at Edinburgh in 1825; another was licensed for the Adelphi in 1829.

[7] An anonymous *Robert the Bruce* appeared at Perth in 1819; this was probably an emended version of a Coburg melodrama, 1819. An Olympic play had been prepared in 1815, Fitzball brought out an operetta at the Surrey in 1834, and an anonymous dramatisation appears in the L.C. plays for Covent Garden in 1835.

held the stage. As *Gregarach* it was presented at Astley's in 1821 and as *Roy's Wife* at the Coburg in 1825. Three separate versions seem to have been prepared thereafter, two for Corbett Ryder's company in Edinburgh (1825) and one for the Coburg (1828). North of the Tweed one may still have the opportunity of seeing it during annual revivals. Once the value of Scott from the theatrical point of view was appreciated, there was a frenzied scrambling among the playwrights for a share in the spoils. Practically every one of the *Waverley* series was seized upon, and for decades the theatres were fed with versions of *Guy Mannering*[1], *The Antiquary*[2], *Old Mortality*[3], *The Fortunes of Nigel*[4], *The Heart of Midlothian*[5], *Ivanhoe*[6], *The Legend of*

[1] The very first adaptation was that of *Guy Mannering* (C.G. 1816) made by D. Terry with the assistance of Scott himself. In 1821 the plot of the novel was combined with that of *La Sorcière* (Paris, 1821) by Dupetit-Méré and Ducange, giving Planché's *The Witch of Derncleuch* (E.O.H.), Jerrold's *The Gipsy of Derncleuch* (S.W.), *Dick Hatteraick* (Cob.) and an anonymous *Witch of Derncleuch* (Edinburgh, 1822). The dramatic fate of this novel was somewhat peculiar. With *The Monastery* it was used by Scribe for *La dame blanche* (Paris, 1825) and the French musical drama was in its turn re-dramatised in English as *The White Lady* (D.L. 1826) and *The White Maid* (C.G. 1827; by Payne), besides being played in the original French on the London stage.

[2] Pocock's *The Antiquary* appeared at Covent Garden in 1818; this was refashioned by Terry (C.G. 1820) and by Murray (Edinburgh, 1820). A Coburg version appeared in 1832.

[3] *Old Mortality* was made into a play by Farley, as *The Battle of Bothwell Brig* (C.G. 1820); a month later Dibdin produced another version (Surrey, 1820) and Calcraft revised one of these for Edinburgh production (1823). The derivative opera, *I Puritani di Scozia* (Paris, 1835), was Englished by Pocock as *Cavaliers and Roundheads* (D.L. 1835), while Marston's *Strathmore* (H.[2] 1849) was inspired by the novel.

[4] Fitzball's *The Fortunes of Nigel* appeared at the Surrey in 1822, Pocock's *Nigel* at Covent Garden in 1823. A *George Heriot* said to be by Ryder was produced at Perth in 1823, and the same year saw an homonymous version by Murray (Edin. 1823).

[5] *The Heart of Midlothian* was particularly popular. In 1819 appeared versions by Dibdin (R.C.), Terry (C.G.), Dimond (Bath), Montague and Jervis (Pantheon, Edin.), and an unknown author (T.R. Edin.). Murray's rendering was produced at Edinburgh in 1824; some unused chapters were taken over for *The Whistler* (Cob. 1833) by G. D. Pitt; while a play by Rafter (Princess, 1849) was based on Paul Duport's *La Vendéenne* (Paris, 1837), a French dramatisation. A fresh version was licensed for Edinburgh in 1841. Maclaren's *Filial Duty* (1819) is from the same source.

[6] *Ivanhoe* also made a wide appeal. No less than seven versions made their appearance in 1820: Dibdin's (Surrey), Moncrieff's (Cob.), Beazley's (C.G.), Soane's (D.L., as *The Hebrew*), anonymous (Adel.), and two printed renderings (London and Birmingham). Calcraft and Murray

Montrose[1], *Peveril of the Peak*[2], *Redgauntlet*[3], *Waverley*[4], *Woodstock*[5], *Kenilworth*[6], *The Abbot*[7], *The Bride of Lammermoor*[8],

brought out successive dramatisations for the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, and as *The Lists of Ashby* it was given at Astley's in 1837. E. Deschamps and G. de Wailly had produced *Ivanhoé* at the Odéon in 1826, and this appeared as *The Maid of Judah* (C.G. 1829), adapted by Lacy. Jackson's *The Templar and the Jewess* (printed 1833) is a modified translation of Wohlbrüch's *Der Templar und die Jüden* (1829), which was played at the Prince's in 1840 and at Drury Lane in 1841.

[1] Dibdin's *The Legend of Montrose* appeared at the Surrey in 1819, and the same year was produced *The Children of the Mist* at the Coburg. A Glasgow version followed within a few months. In 1822 at Covent Garden Pocock's rendering was produced and in 1823 at Edinburgh that of Murray. The Caledonian, Edinburgh, brought out another dramatisation in 1827, and in 1847 a second Glasgow play was printed there.

[2] Fitzball was first in the field with a *Peveril of the Peak* (Surrey, 1823) and his rendering was revised for the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, production in the same year. At Covent Garden in 1826 appeared a fresh dramatisation by Pocock.

[3] An anonymous version of *Redgauntlet* was produced at the Surrey in 1824, and a second, no doubt by Murray, at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, in 1825.

[4] The Corbett Ryder company seems to have been first with a *Waverley* acted at Perth in 1822. The Caledonian, Edinburgh, followed in 1823 (with a new version four years later). Fitzball's drama appeared at the Adel. in 1824, and on this Calcraft based his production at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh (1824). Separate versions were prepared for Covent Garden in 1824 and in 1832.

[5] Pocock's *Woodstock* was produced at Covent Garden in 1826, and the same year dramas of the same title were given in Edinburgh and at the Surrey, the latter by C. Dibdin.

[6] The year 1821 saw at least six versions of *Kenilworth*: Planché's (Adel.), Dibdin's (Surrey), Bunn's (C.G.), Dimond's (Bath), anonymous (Olym.), anonymous (Surrey, as *Elizabeth and Essex*). A seventh appeared at Edinburgh in 1822, and an eighth at the same city in 1824. Drury Lane versions came out in 1824 and 1832, while a new rendering was given at the Caledonian, Edinburgh, in 1825. A ballet, *Kenilworth*, was produced at Covent Garden in 1833. Stirling's *Tilbury Fort* was performed at Gravesend in 1829, and Heath's *The Earl of Leicester* was printed in 1843. A belated dramatisation appeared at Astley's in 1847.

[7] Beverley's *The Abbot* was given at Tottenham-street in 1820 and Murray's *Mary Queen of Scots* at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, in 1825.

[8] In 1819 Dibdin brought forward *The Bride of Lammermoor* (Surrey, 1819) and another was given at Astley's contemporaneously. Calcraft's version is usually cited under the year 1822, but a melodrama, *The Bride of Lammermuir, A Caledonian Romance*, was "allowed" by the Lord Chamberlain for the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, on Oct. 27, 1819. As *The Mermaiden's Well* a dramatisation appeared at the Brunswick in 1828, and another at the Queen's in 1831. Cammarano's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Naples, 1835), with music by Donizetti, was given at H.[1] in 1838, at Drury Lane in 1845, and (in English) at the Princess in 1843 and the Grecian in 1844. A burlesque was prepared for the Strand in 1848.

Quentin Durward[1], *The Black Dwarf*[2], *The Fair Maid of Perth*[3], *The Highland Widow*[4], *The Monastery*[5], *The Pirate*[6], *St Ronan's Well*[7], *The Two Drovers*[8], *The Betrothed*[9], and *The Talisman*[10]—they followed one after another in regular succession. The contemporary enthusiasm was given expression, also, in Knowles' *The Vision of the Bard* (C.G. 1832), a festival in honour of "The Wizard of the North." It is not to be questioned that this enthusiasm aided materially in the still firmer establishment of the melodrama. The themes of Scott's novels are themselves inclined towards that atmosphere which we have come to call melodramatic, and this atmosphere, when transferred to terms of the stage, became necessarily still more pronounced. The romantic settings, the boldly drawn type characters, the clear differentiation of virtue and vice,

[1] A *Quentin Durward* by Haworth was printed in 1823; the same year saw a rendering by Haines at the Coburg. A Caledonian version was presented the same year. A "grand opera" by Fitzball appeared at Covent Garden in 1848.

[2] Arnold's *The Black Dwarf*, or *The Wizard*, appeared at the English Opera House in 1817. As *The Recluse* it was re-rendered at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, and Drury Lane in 1825.

[3] Milner and Lacy brought out *A Fair Maid of Perth* or *St Valentine's Eve* at the Coburg in 1828. The same year the Bass company seems to have had another at Perth. A later version by Webb appeared at the Surrey in 1845.

[4] *Dougal the Piper* appeared at the Adelphi, Edinburgh, in 1836. The following year a new rendering, *The Highland Widow*, is to be found in the L.C. collection. As *Military Punishment* a third version was given at the Surrey in 1846.

[5] See *The White Lady* under *Guy Mannering*.

[6] In 1822 appeared three versions of *The Pirate*: Dibdin's (Surrey), Planché's (Olym.) and Dimond's (D.L.). Another drama was given at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, in 1824. I do not know whether Dibdin's pantomime, *The Pirate*, has anything to do with this novel. A later rendering came out at the Grecian in 1844.

[7] A dramatisation by Planché of *St Ronan's Well* was brought out at the Adelphi in 1824 and was used a few months later at Edinburgh. McNeill had another produced at the Princess, Edinburgh, at the same time. Still another appeared at D.L. in 1824.

[8] A Caledonian (Edinburgh) production was first in the field in 1827. This was followed by Murray's at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, in 1828. Goff's was given at the Surrey in 1849.

[9] See under Unknown Authors *The Betrothed* (Olym. 1826) and *The Betrothed; or, The Eve of St Mark* (Queen's, 1836).

[10] *The Talisman* first appeared as *Knights of the Cross* (D.L. 1826) by Beazley. An Edinburgh playwright brought out a second version in 1825.

the innumerable adventures—all these appealed to the age and led towards many an imitation. The enthusiasm for Scott, too, opened up the whole field of fiction for the theatre. Old novels were dug up again, and, above all, the bookstalls were eagerly ransacked for any new work which might have a stirring and popular plot. Typical of the frenzied rush which greeted the appearance of a popular favourite is the collection of dramatic versions of *The Cricket on the Hearth* preserved among the Lord Chamberlain's documents at St James's Palace. The Lyceum seems to have been first on the field with a rendering which was licensed on Dec. 17, 1845. The following weeks must have been busy ones for the official Reader of Plays, for on Jan. 3, 1846, versions of the same novel were licensed for the Princess's, the Albert Saloon, the Adelphi, the Marylebone, the City of London and the Haymarket. On the 16th of the month an Apollo Saloon version was set free, and on the same day an Olympic burlesque entitled *The Cricket on our Own Hearth* received the official signature. This was in less than one month from the date when the first early dramatisation had been "allowed." By the 23rd of the month, still another adaptation was being performed in Edinburgh.

Scores of similar examples might be taken, but this one may be sufficient to stand as symbolic of the eagerness with which the dramatists rushed to take advantage of the material offered to them in contemporary fiction. Almost all novelists were exploited, from old favourites such as Smollett[1], down to the latest favourites of the hour. A startling romance, such as Mrs Shelley's *Frankenstein*, could arouse tremendous enthusiasm[2], and a tale of eccentric humours, such as Egan's *Life in London*[3], could provide dramatic material for years.

[1] See Dibdin's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (R.C. 1818) and *Humphrey Clinker* (R.C. 1818). Another version of the latter appeared at S.W. in 1828. Dibdin also wrote a *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (R.C. 1818).

[2] In 1823 versions appeared at the English Opera House, Royalty and Coburg. Milner's rendering (Cob. 1823) and Brough's burlesque (Adel. 1849) testify to its enduring popularity.

[3] The following is not an exhaustive list: Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry* (Adel. 1821), *Tom and Jerry* (S.W. 1822), Dibdin's *Life in London* (Olym. 1821), *Tom, Jerry and Logic* (Royalty, 1822), *Tom and Jerry*

Naturally there were among the novelists those who were particularly followed; popularity attended Cooper[1], Lytton[2], Ainsworth[3] and Dickens. The last-mentioned is sufficiently important to demand fuller analysis. *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1837) appealed because of its mixture of humour and pathos[4], and the same qualities were those which made the succeeding novels popular. Nearly all saw several adaptations—*Oliver Twist* (1838)[5], *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–9)[6], *Barnaby Rudge* (1841)[7], *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841)[8], *A Christmas Carol* (1843)[9], *Martin Chuzzlewit*

(Edinburgh T.R. 1823), *Tom and Jerry in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, Caledonian, 1823), Macfarren's *Tom and Jerry in France* (Cob. 1822), *Our Future Fate; or, Tom, Jerry and Logic in* 1845 (Cob. 1823), *Tom, Jerry and Logic Hop at Brighton* (L.C. Collection, 1834), *Nautical Tom and Jerry* (Liverpool, 1843).

[1] *The Bravo*: Buckstone's (Adel. 1833), Barnett's (Surrey, 1833). *The Pilot*: Fitzball's (Adel. 1825), anonymous (Cob. 1826), (Adel. 1830). *The Red Rover*: Fitzball's (Adel. 1829), anonymous (Cob. 1829). *The Wept of the Wish-ton-Wish*: Bernard's (Adel. 1831). *The Water Witch*: anonymous (Adel. 1830). This list is, of course, by no means complete.

[2] *Paul Clifford*: Fitzball's (C.G. 1835), Webster's (Cob. 1832). *Eugene Aram*: anonymous (Edin. 1832), anonymous (R.P. 1832), Moncrieff's (Surrey, 1832). *The Last Days of Pompeii*: Fitzball's (Vic. 1835), Buckstone's (Adel. 1834). A whole crowd of "Last" this and "Last" that shows the impress of his style.

[3] Cf. *Jack Sheppard*: Buckstone's (Adel. 1839), Haines' (Surrey, 1839), anonymous (Hull, 1839), Murray's (Edin. 1840). Most of his novels were used by one or another writer.

[4] W. L. Rede's *The Peregrinations of Pickwick* (Adel. 1837), Stirling's *The Pickwick Club* (C.L. 1837), anonymous *Pickwick* (Norwich, 1838), Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* (Strand, 1837, "new edition," 1838), anonymous *Sam Weller's Tour; or, The Pickwickians Abroad* (Strand, 1838). *The Pickwickians* (L.C. Collection, 1837) is probably Rede's drama. At the Strand in 1840 appeared *Mr Weller's Watch*.

[5] Almar's (Surrey, 1838), anonymous (St. J. 1838), C. Z. Barnett's (R.P. 1838), Stirling's (Adel. 1839), Murray's (Edin. 1840), Greenwood's (S.W. 1838).

[6] Stirling brought out a *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Adelphi in 1838. This was followed by an anonymous version at the Strand and by *Poor Smike* at the Vic., both in 1839. Stirling has a sequel, *The Fortunes of Smike* (Adel. 1840).

[7] Selby and Melville produced an E.O.H. version in 1841; another, by Stirling, came out the same year at the Strand, and a third followed at the Adelphi in 1842.

[8] Stirling's version appeared at the Adelphi at the end of 1840.

[9] Four dramatisations were produced in 1844: Stirling's (Adel.), C. Z. Barnett's (Surrey), anonymous (Strand) and anonymous (S.W., as *Scrooge, the Miser's Dream*).

(1843–4)[1], *The Chimes* (1844)[2], *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845)[3], *The Battle of Life* (1846)[4], *Dombey and Son* (1846–8)[5] and *The Haunted Man* (1848)[6].

Before leaving this question of the adaptation of Dickens' novels to the stage there is one point of interest which may be rapidly discussed. One notes that, in the rush of the dramatists, one nearly always out-distances his peers by a week or two, and that occasionally a particular playwright succeeds in anticipating the end of the novel before that has made its appearance in print. Now in *The Almanack of the Month* for Jan. 1846[7], it is asserted that Dickens provided Albert Smith with the "proof-sheets hot from the press" of *The Cricket on the Hearth*. This seems to provide the true explanation of the facts outlined above, but a passage from the anonymous skit called *The Civil War of Poetry* (Olym. 1846) provides us with something more—a statement that Dickens gave his manuscript to the adapter and that he received money for the favour. In this play, after a discussion among the giants of antiquity—Shakespeare, Jonson and Otway—there enter two modern dramatists. The first is representative of those who take from the French. Says he[8]:

I must indeed, my friend, confess
I have at present great Success.

[1] Three versions appeared in 1844: Higgie's and Lacy's (Queen's), Webb's (Strand), and Stirling's (Lyc.).

[2] Five versions appeared in 1844: Lemon and à Beckett's (Adel.), Stirling's (Lyc.), Edwards' (Apollo) and two anonymous (Albert and Queen's).

[3] Two versions appeared in 1845: Smith's (Lyc.) and Stirling's (Adel.); and six in 1846: Archer's (Edin.), Barnett's (Albert), Rayner's (Apollo), Webster's (H.²), Townsend's (C.L.) and anonymous at Princess's and Marylebone. A burlesque by Blanchard, *The Cricket on our Own Hearth*, was given at the Olympic in 1846. See *supra*, p. 96.

[4] Smith's *The Battle of Life* was produced at the Lyceum in 1846, while six others came out in 1847; Stirling's (Surrey), Somerset's (Bower), Atkyns (Albert), Lyon's (C.L.) and two anonymous (Britannia and Norwich).

[5] Taylor's *Dombey and Son* was given at the Strand in 1847.

[6] Versions of this appeared at the Olympic, the Albert, and the Adelphi in 1848.

[7] Quoted in T. E. Pemberton, *Charles Dickens and the Stage* (1888), p. 158.

[8] This quotation is from the MS. in the L.C. Collection; the play is not printed. I have supplied punctuation, of which the dialogue is entirely innocent.

Why! of the piece that I'm translating
(Which now is Paris agitating)
Four versions have been booked as yet,
And I expect to-day to get
An order to supply another.

Whereupon the second proceeds to account for his time:

I'm pretty full of occupation;
I'm working at an adaptation
Of the great Story to the Stage,
Which all expect will be the rage
When it comes out. 'Tis not yet printed,
But, as we'd have it represented
Before our rivals, we've succeeded
In getting Boz's leave to read it
In Manuscript (of course you know
That golden reasons work'd him so).

31280

This seems to suggest an unsuspected source of income for the by no means financially careless Boz.

It will be realised that Dickens' novels helped, like Scott's, in still further developing the melodramatic tradition, and, besides this, that they contributed in preventing the development of a new and truer dramatic technique. Careless adaptation of narrative fiction can lead towards nothing but the stringing together of episodes, and it is this episodical treatment which, more than anything else, mars the workmanship of the plays of the half century. The influences on the stage of the period all tended towards the same ends. The better work of France and Germany was neglected; only the higher and the more spectacular pieces were seized upon. Narrative poetry[1] and narrative prose of native composition were taken, not for their higher qualities, but for the thrill or force of the mere tale itself. Finer dramatic technique was lost; characterisation was not sought for; incidents alone could make a direct and a popular appeal.

[1] A long list could be given of the poems of the period which were dramatised. Naturally Byron, with his romantic lays, was popular. So was Southey with his *Thalaba the Destroyer* (anonymous version, Cob. 1823; Fitzball's, C.G. 1836). Everywhere, however, the dramatists searched—from Burns (Ebsworth's *Tam O'Shanter*, Cob. 1820; anonymous version, R.A. 1828; Addison's, D.L. 1834) to Pope (Oxenford's *The Rape of the Lock*, Olym. 1837).

CHAPTER III

THE ILLEGITIMATE DRAMA

I. *Melodramas*

FROM the summary of playhouse conditions given in the preceding chapters, it will be realised that the illegitimate far surpassed in popularity that form of drama which Mr Plumpton Marsh vaingloriously thought to establish in London. Melodrama of a kind was to be seen before 1800; melodrama, like the poor, will no doubt always be with us; but when we think of early nineteenth century theatres we think of them as the home *par excellence* of spectacularism and of melodramatic effect. There is, accordingly, every justification for beginning a survey of the dramatic literature of the time with this type of despised and neglected entertainment.

Roughly, the melodramas of the period may be classed in three main divisions: the romantic, the supernatural and the domestic; and we may consider this dramatic form as a whole to have developed chronologically from one division to another in the order which is given above. Pixérécourt, who, as we have seen, gave the final impetus to the melodramatic movement, was primarily romantic in aim, and that romantic atmosphere was consolidated in the English theatres through the influence of Sir Walter Scott. Romanticism, however, always loves the strange and the uncanny, and we do not feel surprise when we discover ghosts and goblins freely mingling with more material personages on the romantic stage. Those ghosts and goblins, however, soon come to assume a predominant position, and thus is evolved the *Freischütz* drama, in which the interest definitely centres in the supernatural effects. Perhaps the domestic melodrama

may be regarded as a kind of reaction to both these types, although in essence it is but the enunciation by illegitimacy of that realistic tendency which ever accompanies romanticism. On the one side, the fanciful kingdoms, the gloomy castles, the ruined abbeys; on the other, the dingy cottage, the slum tenement, the poverty-stricken alleys.

All of these types of melodramatic activity, of course, share certain common characteristics. As the name itself shows, all melodrama freely utilises the service of music. Not only are songs introduced at fitting (and unfitting) moments, but the action proceeds to the accompaniment of instrumental orchestration which strives always to be as "appropriate" as possible[1]. Thus Moncrieff's *Giselle* (S.W. 1841) has "*Supernatural Music*" in act II, while "*Spherical Music*" and "*Pastoral Music*" adorn the same author's *Zoroaster* (D.L. 1824). After these the merely "*Hurried Music*" of Campbell's *The Forest Oracle* (S.W. 1829) seems exceedingly tame. No doubt this music was often of a very primitive nature, and occasionally, perhaps, became perfunctory in execution, but that it formed for most of the audience at least one source of pleasure seems amply proved, not only by contemporary references, but by the fact that it persisted even after the Act of 1843 had removed the so-called "Burletta" restrictions. Perhaps an unconscious æsthetic feeling was at work, the slow or frenzied music harmonising with the artificial sentiments expressed in the dialogue and the unnatural characters introduced.

These unnatural characters form the second great characteristic of melodrama. There may be occasional deviations, but usually we can find in any specimen of the *genre* the presence of the well-known stock types: hero and heroine (almost always in distress), humorous confidant for the former and confidante for the latter, villain black as night and villainess of ruddy hue. The action varies, naturally, from one play to another, but frequently the stories are complicated by

[1] Pocock's *The Miller and his Men* (C.G. 1813) has a stage direction in act II: "*Riber, on seeing Frederick, draws a poniard.—As he raises his arm, Grindoff catches it, and prevents the blow.—Music appropriate.*"

criss-cross love emotions not unreminiscent of those presented more than a century before in Dryden's *The Indian Emperour*. Attempted seductions, wrongful accusations, disloyalties, hidden secrets, lost parentage keep the puppets in continual movement upon the stage.

The third characteristic of the type is the attention devoted to action, and this increases as the decades pass by. It is easily understood that, since the earlier romantic melodramas had usually plots full of thrilling situations, the action as such should be more deeply marked than in ordinary tragedy. This tendency towards action was without a doubt intensified by the fact that the melodrama really absorbed within itself the historic spectacle which had been one of Astley's prime attractions. In these spectacles mimetic action alone was used to convey to the audience the development of the story, the only other indication being occasional sentences scrawled (often with undue aspirates, false grammar and mangled spelling) on the "printed flags" of which we read in Cross' *Circusiana* and in Leigh Hunt's criticism[1]. Many of the melodramas were merely these historic spectacles given a certain amount of dialogue, but preserving as their prime attraction the scenic effects and the mimetic movement. Naturally, as the writers of melodrama had to turn out scores of these pieces to make a living, and as stage directions are easier to write than dialogue, this action-element was not only retained but increased. The resultant effects on dramatic composition may well be realised. Whenever a Pocock or a Fitzball comes to a really difficult situation he switches off his dialogue and turns to the italics and capitals of stage direction. This is particularly marked at the close of these plays. Thus Macfarren in *The Boy of Santillane* (D.L. April 1827), after an artificial passage of dialogue, ends his drama with action:

With a desperate effort [ROLANDO] *pulls the ring—the grating flies open*—GIL BLAS *and* DONNA MENSIA *escape*—DESPARDO *following them, encounters* ROLANDO *just as the explosion takes place, which rends the mountain, crushes the tower, and discovers*

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 31.

the cave beneath, burying ROLANDO, DESPARDO, *and the rest of the band, in the blazing ruins*—DON MARTIN *joins the hands of* GIL BLAS *and* DONNA MENSIA—ALVAREZ *and the Holy Brotherhood re-enter*—CORCUELO *exults.—Tableau.*

Perhaps, to show the prevalence of this custom, some further examples may not be out of place. Explosions, as providing a thrilling finale, were specially popular; one, in Campbell's *The Forest Oracle* (S.W. Nov. 1829), is planned on the same lines as that of Macfarren's:

He rushes down, followed by Aranza, Aaron, and party, with torches—general fight—Filippo catches the Child, and throws it in the torrent—Delzi knocks him down, and, mounting the bridge, looks anxiously after it—jumps in—two Men fire after him—Filippo beckons two others, who ascend the bridge, and fire—Aaron, who has received a whisper from Adriani, seizes a torch, and, firing the train, the bridge blows up with a tremendous explosion—all are struck motionless—Delzi is seen coming through the ruins with the Child—he places it in its parents' arms—Colonna rushes forward to stab it, when Delzi, catching his poniard, stabs him—the Filippo party are conquered—Picture—Curtain Falls.

Sometimes the stage directions, penned more "poetically," deal with supernatural effects, as in Moncrieff's *Giselle* (S.W. 1841):

The Dell of the Mist in the Forest of Rosenbad; a romantic thicket; wild shrubs and flowers thickly bestrew the ground; the silvery mist of the morning is seen ascending in natural incense from the earth, gilded by the first rays of the rising Sun, which is brightly piercing through the forest verdure, at the back, chasing the shades of night, and lighting up the dew drops with its beams like fairy lamps.—Supernatural Music.—LOTTA *and* WILIS *enter, slowly waltzing onwards, their movements becoming fainter and weaker, as the Sun's rays beam more strongly, 'till, staggering and apparently dying away, they disappear through the tufts of flowers at the wings.*

Sometimes it is a scene of "real life" with the poetry left far behind, as in Moncrieff's *The Scamps of London* (S.W. Nov. 1843):

Charlotte *has rushed to* Bob—Louisa *to* Herbert—*and* Eliza, *encouraged by her Father, to* Frank. *A desperate Combat then takes place between* Police, *headed by* Fogg—*and* Onion, Brindle, *and* Scamps, *headed by* Devereux—*the* Police *hastening to secure them—*

pistols are fired—cutlasses crossed, 'till Onion *and* Scamps *are conquered by the* Police; *and* Devereux *receives a pistol shot from* Fogg, *who has wrested it from him in the struggle, when levelled at his own head, and, in self-defence, has lodged the contents of it in* Devereux's *body, it stretches him lifeless on the ground—with his last breath he makes a motion as if imploring pardon.* Fogg *regards him with great agitation, then turns away, as if in forgiveness, and raises his eyes to heaven in grateful thanks—he then sinks into his daughter's arms, who leaves* Herbert *to support him.* Shabner *has sneaked off in the confusion—Parties form Tableau, and Curtain falls.*

It will be noted here how much that is purely psychological is expected to be shown outwardly by the performers, and we are led back once more to those methods of acting which have been briefly referred to above[1]. All of these scenes already quoted are innocent of dialogue, hence everything is left to the player; in all, the action is of a boisterous or thrilling nature, hence no subtle effects could be employed. In a modern "discussion play," where two or three characters remain almost motionless on the stage for an entire act, the whole effect depending upon the talk itself, there may be the opportunity for more delicate outward indications of feeling on the part of the actors; but, in a large theatre, with a score of people on the stage, amid a riot of swift movement and a regular bombardment of shots and explosions, nothing but the broadest effects could be attempted. The depiction of anger, therefore, would be very much as the author of Dicks' pamphlet recommended and Fogg's expression of forgiveness would take on a very material form. It is clear that the close relationship between the player and the playwright would lead towards an intensification of these type emotions both in the histrionic sphere and in that of dramatic creation. The actors need such plays as these where the broad effects will be telling; the dramatists, for their part, knowing that only the broad effects can be secured, continue drawing their types, their stock figures, and, both for effect and for ease (to say nothing of haste), they continue to piece out their dialogue with plentiful passages of noisy stage

[1] See *supra*, pp. 48–9.

direction. They know quite well that these are as pleasing to the audience as the dialogue itself. One must not, of course, be too severe in criticising this tendency. Not only is action a very important element in any theatrical performance, but even in the greater ages action has been accepted boldly as something popular and as an instrument for securing a certain impression. Stage directions were simple in Shakespeare's time; but, had there been then the fashion of the lengthy instructions to the players, we should have had quite a considerable amount of italics in the First Folio. As any performance of *As You Like It* shows, there is not nearly enough dialogue to go round, and the wrestling bout must take place either in silence or (more modernly) amid a confused and confusing *sotto voce* murmur from the whole cast—thought by the producer to be realistic. In condemning the melodrama, we have undoubtedly to be on our guard, lest the net with which we set out to catch sparrows inadvertently entangle an eagle.

The themes of the melodramas are of varying character, but excitement, exaltation of virtue and poetic justice appear in all. Most popular, perhaps, were the romantic subjects, particularly if these were spiced with a little pathetic humanitarianism and a dash of ghostliness. Dimond's *The Æthiop* (C.G. Oct. 1812) gives us plenty of the latter; Brooks' *The Creole; or, Love's Fetters* (Lyc. April 1847) provides humanitarian sentiment in abundance. Not only is there in this last-mentioned drama a direct appeal to the audience in favour of the anti-slavery campaign, but the story itself is planned as a concrete example of the horrors of the slave-trade. Here Alphonse, the hero, meets and loves Louise, the heroine, but she, unfortunately, is found to be legally his slave. For imagined wrongs the Creole Latour plans vengeance on the hero, and, by his villainous tricks, he gets Louise sold to himself. Disaster seems imminent when the usual melodramatic *deus ex machina* arrives in the shape of an order of slave-abolition from the French Government. A similar aim is shown in *The Destruction of the Bastille* (Adel. 1842) by Benjamin Webster. The true love of Victor

Rollande and Ernestine (the latter discovers that she is the daughter of Robespierre), the jealousy of Ninon, the brutal villainy of Guillaume Le Rouge and the humorous honesty of Coco Latour, all go to make up a *mélange* of tears and laughter held together by the thin strands of the story and the predominant humanitarian aim. Themes taken from the history, or legend, of the French Revolution were popular, and sometimes, as in George Macfarren's "historical opera" (really a melodrama) of *Lestocq; or, The Fête of the Hermitage* (C.G. Feb. 1835)[1], the playwrights went further afield to treat of inhumanity and kindness and tyranny and liberal sentiment in Slavonic lands. In this play of Macfarren's we get the typical villain in Count Goloffkin, distressed innocence in low life presented by Stroloff and his Catherine, nobility in the Princess Elizabeth and a *deus ex machina* in the person of Lestocq, the clever French physician. As *Lestocq* provides another good example of the speechless scene, the last lines of the play may be quoted here:

SCENE IV.—*The Imperial Palace—the barrier-gate across from* R. *to* L. *third entrance—barracks and guard-house*, R.*—beyond the gates, the bridge of the Moika*, C., *leading to the Imperial Palace, which runs across in the distance from* R. *to* L.*—a large pile of arms near the guard-house.*

A Sentinel discovered on duty on the right of the barrier-gate.

Enter an Insurgent, peeping on cautiously, L.

He fires on the Sentinel, who falls—drums and trumpets sound an alarm—the populace rush in R. *and* L., *armed with various weapons, and seize the arms near the guard-house—a body of the Imperial Guard charge the conspirators, and drive them back—they rally again, and drag on a cannon and ammunition*, L., *and storm the barrier-gate, which is carried by the people.*

COUNT GOLOFFKIN *is seen in the midst of the battle—he is shot by* STROLOFF, *and borne off*, L.

The Imperial Palace and Bridge become suddenly illuminated—the Soldiers are beaten off, R. *and* L.*—the people rush on the bridge to meet the procession, shouting*, "Hurrah! hurrah!—Long live the Empress Elizabeth!"

[1] Adapted from the *Lestocq* of Scribe with music by Auber. The distinction between "operas" of this type and melodramas is but a slight one.

CHORUS. [*During the Procession.*]

God bless the empress!
Whose worth we proclaim:
Her life be all glorious,
And deathless her fame.

PROCESSION.

Two officers of the Novgorod Regiment.
A File of Soldiers of the Novgorod Regiment.
Band.
Hussars.
Preobajenski Guard.
LESTOCQ—EMPRESS ELIZABETH—EUDOSIA—DIMITRI.
Four Train-bearers.
STROLOFF—CATHERINE.
Maids of Honour.
Officers of the Novgorod Regiment.
Officers of the Preobajenski Guard.
Flag.
Peasantry—Soldiers—Peasantry.

That such speechless scenes were particularly loved in the English theatre is shown by a comparison of this last portion of Macfarren's drama with the corresponding scene[1] in his original, Scribe's *Lestocq ou l'intrigue et l'amour* (Paris, Opéra-Comique, May 1834). The passage is given here for purposes of contrast, and the two may be regarded as thoroughly typical of the nineteenth century adaptations from the French:

(*En ce moment, le peuple se précipite sur le théâtre, mêlé aux soldats. Les fenêtres du fond sont ouvertes. On voit en dehors, à la lueur des torches, une des places principales de Saint-Pétersbourg.*)

CHŒUR.

Vive l'impératrice
Qui proclament nos vœux;
Que chacun obéisse
A son nom glorieux!
Vive l'impératrice
Qui proclament nos vœux!

(*Paraît Élisabeth, appuyée sur le bras de Lestocq, et entourée de tous les conjurés.*)

[1] IV. ix.

DIMITRI.

Que vois-je! Élisabeth?

LESTOCQ.

Que le peuple couronne,
Et qui voit à ses pieds ses ennemis vaincus.

ÉLISABETH.

Grâce pour eux, qu'on leur pardonne.
Grâce pour Golofkin. (*A Strolof*) Courez vite!

STROLOF, *froidement.*

Il n'est plus.

DIMITRI, *à part, avec joie.*

Ciel! il n'existe plus!

LESTOCQ, *à Strolof.*

En as-tu l'assurance?

STROLOF, *froidement.*

Je m'en étais chargé; je l'avais retenu:
Un seul jour a payé vingt-cinq ans de vengeance.

ÉLISABETH.

Je vous dois tout, Lestocq. (*Montrant les autres conjurés.*)
Ainsi qu'à leur vaillance.
(*Apercevant Dimitri, elle fait un geste d'émotion, et s'avance vers lui.*)
Et vous...vous dont le zèle à mon cœur est connu,
Que puis-je faire ici pour votre récompense?

DIMITRI.

J'en veux une.

ÉLISABETH, *tendrement.*

Parlez.

DIMITRI, *hésitant.*

C'est...non pas maintenant...
Mais plus tard...de daigner...me protégeant vous-même,
Vous employer pour moi près de celle que j'aime,
Près d'Eudoxie...

ÉLISABETH, *chancelant, et s'appuyant sur Lestocq.*

O ciel! (*A Lestocq, avec un regard douloureux.*)
Vous m'avez trompée!

LESTOCQ.

Oui!
Pour voir sur votre front briller le diadème!
(*Lui montrant les soldats qui lui portent les armes.*)
Votre règne commence.

ÉLISABETH, *à part, regardant Dimitri, et essuyant une larme.*

Et les chagrins aussi!

CHŒUR.

Vive à jamais, vive l'impératrice
Que sur le trône appelaient tous nos vœux!
Houra! houra! que chacun obéisse,
Et que tout cède à son nom glorieux!
Vive l'impératrice
Que proclament nos vœux!

(*Les tambours battent aux champs, les trompettes sonnent, les cloches se font entendre, le peuple agite ses chapeaux, ses mouchoirs, et les soldats leurs drapeaux.—La toile tombe.*)

It will be at once apparent how heavily the English dramatist has stressed the purely physical action, and how, in the French version, almost all the content of the scene is devoted to the development of the sentiments of the characters. It will be noted also how much more directly Macfarren has dealt with the killing of the villain Goloffkin by his former serf, Stroloff. Humanitarianism construed as poetic justice to the oppressor always appealed in English melodrama.

These humanitarian melodramas, however, much as they may use romantic incident and surroundings, nearly always aim at a certain domestic or realistic effect, and consequently do not show in fullest form that love of the strange, the outlandish and the picturesque which clearly swayed many among the audiences at the beginning of the century. Sometimes humour and exciting incident prevail, as in Frederick Reynolds' *The Caravan; or, The Driver and his Dog* (D.L. Dec. 1803), which won success mainly through the exertions of the life-saving dog Carlos, and partly through the secret-dispensing qualities of Blabbo. Sometimes the romantic qualities of the story overwhelm all else, and possibly this

is the commonest type. Dimond's *The Bride of Abydos* (D.L. Feb. 1818), described as "A Tragick Play" but naught else than a melodrama, shows by its very title that love of the East which attracted so many minds, great and small, of the period. This drama is full of picturesque poses—"*The Curtain falls upon the picture*" and "*The Characters form into a Picture of mute attention and the drop falls*" are stage directions that tell their own tale. Then there is the appeal of the Middle Ages or of ages which, if not middle, are at any rate sufficiently dimly outlined to stand for all kinds of Gothicism. Kerr's *Therese, or The Orphan of Geneva* (W.L. 1821), itself adapted from the French, tells a romantic story in which Therese is pursued by the villain Valther and loved by the magnanimous Charles, Count de Senange. By the end of the play the unfortunate Valther—for he is to be pitied in spite of his villainy—thinks he has satisfactorily disposed of the heroine, but, on seeing her alive and believing her to be a ghost, miserably confesses his crimes. Music plays at each entry and stage directions freely bespatter the text. A moment spent in *Therese's* company may not be either unprofitable or unamusing. We have come to the end of the second act and there, once more, our ears are treated to music:

(*They retire, the lightning flashes with redoubled fury, and the thunder rolls loudly awful.* Valther *enters cautiously, the night becomes still darker.*

Val. All are retired—I am alone—there is but one course to pursue. 'Tis in that chamber Therese reposes—the darkness, the roar of the thunder, all favour me. Let me listen all is safe, yet I shudder, in spite of my natural courage. Conscience—psha!—she must, she must die. (*draws out the knife which he had concealed in his bosom.*) The door is open (*looks into the farm-house*)—no one appears (*pointing to the door*)—it invites my entrance—I go, and it is done.

(*He hastily shuts the window, and enters, at that moment* Charles *and* Picard *cross the yard, as if in quest of some one. A plaintive cry is heard from the pavilion—at the same moment a thunder-bolt strikes the building, destroying a part of it.* Valther, *in a state of consternation, bursts*

through the windows, and rushes off 1st *ent.* L.H.; Therese *enters from the farm-house, and sees the pavilion in flames.*

The. What noise—what frightful lightning. Ah! Madame de Senange is lost. (*Enters* the pavilion, crying) Help! help!

(Music. *At the same moment* Mathurin *and* Bridget, Nanette *and all the servants, enter from the farm*; Charles *and* Picard *at the same instant.*

Math. Ah! 'tis the thunder that has fallen on the farm. Fire! fire! fire!

Chas. (*hastening towards the pavilion*). Heavens! the flames engulph the pavilion. My mother! oh, my mother!

Math. Hasten—let us save Madame de Senange.

(Music. *All the characters hasten to gain the burning pavilion, when* Therese *appears at the window, her hair disordered, holding a Knife in her hand.*

The. It is too late—Madame de Senange is murdered.

All. Murdered!

Chas. Heavens!

The. Behold, behold her blood!—'tis I, 'tis I?

(*She falls on her face.*

Chas. (*throwing himself on the stairs*). Oh, my mother!—(*the flames burst from every part of the edifice*)—Oh, my mother!

(*Part of the spectators regard* Therese *with a fright, while the rest haste to prevent* Charles *from precipitating himself into the flames; the conflagration is in its heighth when the act drop falls.*

All comes right in the end, of course, and after this bustle and noise and darkness comes the time when Valther in terror avows his guilt, when the sorrows of Therese terminate and when she is recognised as the Countess of Volmar. At the conclusion the characters form themselves into a decorous semicircle, Therese in the middle and Valther abjectly crouching on the ground in front of her.

If we wish to find the sister of Therese, we have not far to seek. Countless heroines possess her virtues, her sorrows and her joys. Usually she is of unknown parentage like the Julia of Pocock's *Twenty Years Ago!* (Lyc. July 1810) who is defended by her own father (though both are ignorant of their relationship) against the machinations of the evil Count D'Essars. Often, too, as in this last-mentioned play, her lover is the son of the villain, the former being presented all the more whitely for his father's darkness and treachery.

In this combination of apparently friendless orphan, unknown father, villain and virtuous son we are reminded once more of the truly native element in nineteenth century melodrama. Precisely the same grouping of characters is to be discovered in *The Secret*, by Edward Morris, a play produced at Drury Lane in 1799[1].

Sometimes, of course, it is the hero who is distressed. Thus Velasco in *The Watch-Word, or Quito-Gate* (D.L. Oct. 1816) is wrongfully accused of a murderous attack upon another, nearly misses thereby his chance of marrying Louisa, is finally proved innocent and, in the last tableau, joins his hands with hers. To this type of hero belongs ultimately the virtuous brigand, who, tracing his ancestry back to *Die Raüber*, had a distinguished career during the half-century. Here, as in Campbell's *The Forest Oracle; or, The Bridge of Tresino* (S.W. Nov. 1829) there is commonly a pair of brothers, one evil and villainous who seizes the estates and makes attempts on the heroine, and the other full of all noble virtues who, cast out on a friendless cold world, joins his fortunes with those of a band of sentimental robbers and eventually wins again his own and the heroine.

Then there are the historical melodramas, ranging for setting, if not for subject-matter, over the whole field of civilised or uncivilised life. Pocock seizes on Anglo-Saxon times in *Alfred the Great; or, The Enchanted Standard* (C.G. Nov. 1827), taking some of his material from O'Keeffe's *The Magic Banner* and dealing with his material in a manner not so far distant from the treatment by Sheridan Knowles of his more pretentious *Alfred the Great* (D.L. 1831). These historical dramas naturally received especial popularity when the dramatic possibilities of Scott's novels came to be recognised. It is unnecessary here to re-comment on the various versions of *Rob Roy*, *Redgauntlet*, *The Antiquary*, *Woodstock* and the rest[2], but these innumerable adaptations played such an important part in the theatrical history of the age that they may in no wise be forgotten. Nor was Scott the only historical

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 138–9.
[2] See *supra*, pp. 92–5.

novelist who thus provided material for the playwrights. Other contemporary authors were ransacked, and some dramatists, like Pocock in his *Robinson Crusoe; or, The Bold Bucaniers* (C.G. April 1817), cast their glances back to the picaresque and adventurous fiction of the preceding century.

Ghosts and goblins, fiends and fairies—the stage embodiment of disembodied creatures—next must occupy our attention. Monk Lewis with *The Castle Spectre* had introduced romantic diablerie to the English boards and gloomily it continued to flourish. The German terror school naturally (or unnaturally) ruled here predominant, although generally France served as intermediary. Moncrieff's *Giselle; or, The Phantom Night Dancers* (S.W. Aug. 1841), described as "A Domestic, Melo-dramatic, Choreographic, Fantastique, Traditionary Tale of Superstition," is thoroughly typical. The "tale of superstition" comes from Germany, but the prime model of the author seems to have been a French ballet called *Giselle* danced at the Académie de Musique on June 28, 1841. The whole play is full of mysterious figures amid which move the human actors, Aloise (alias Duke Albert), a sentimental villain, Hilarion, a hero, and Giselle, a heroine. The last-mentioned is seized by the fays known as the Wilis and duly rescued at the end by her lover. Moncrieff loved this style of play, and another production of his, *Zoroaster; or, The Spirit of the Star* (D.L. April 1824), may be regarded as equally typical. This is once more derived from a ballet[1], and, like *Giselle*, abounds in scenic effects[2]. The magical devices of Zoroaster, as the title shows, form the chief interest of this "Grand Melo-dramatic Tale of Enchantment." Passing over the many Frankensteins and Freischütz we may pause for a moment on Fitzball's *The Flying Dutchman; or, The Phantom Ship* (Adel. Jan. 1826) which, according to the author, "was not by any means behind even Frankenstein, or Der Freischütz itself in horrors and blue fire[3]." The story is a perfectly simple one, narrating how Lestelle Vanhelm,

[1] Gardel's *L'enfant prodigue.*
[2] See *supra*, p. 101.
[3] *Thirty-Five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life*, i. 169.

who loves Mowdrey, is carried off by the spirity Vanderdecken and heroically rescued at the conclusion from his chill clutch. This, however, is the merest framework, for, as "D— G." remarks in his preface to the Cumberland edition,

the author of the Flying Dutchman has wisely catered for all palates: for those whose taste inclines them to the terrible, he has provided thunder and lightning in abundance, thrown in a grotesque dance of water imps, and served up a death's head (not according to the old adage, stewed in a lantern), but picturesquely mounted on a black flag, and garnished with cross bones; while to the laughing souls, to whom—

> "A merry jest is better far
> Than sharp lampoon or witty libel,"

he presents a bill of fare irresistibly comic. We may, therefore, congratulate the "*violent spirits*" of the present day on the production of a piece where mirth and moonshine—murder and merriment—fire and fun, are so happily blended!

The fun is provided by Peter Von Bummel, Toby Varnish and Mynheer Von Swiggs; the fire is contributed by Vanderdecken, nor is that fire extinguished by the watery presence of Rockalda, wearing a "sorceress's sea-green dress, trimmed with sea-weed and shells," and by that of Eight Water-Imps. At one point in the play the Flying Dutchman, with mimetic show, offers a letter to the sailors:

> MUSIC.—*Peter attempts to snatch the letter, when it explodes—a sailor is about to seize Vanderdecken, who eludes his grasp, and vanishes through the deck—Tom Willis fires on* R., *Von Swiggs on* L.—*a Sailor falls dead on the deck—Vanderdecken, with a demoniac laugh, rises from the sea in blue fire, amidst violent thunder—at that instant the Phantom Ship appears in the sky behind—Vanderdecken and the Crew in consternation exclaim* "Ah! Vanderdecken! Vanderdecken!" *as the drop hastily falls.*

That is the end of act I, and it prepares us for all the terrors that are to come. What thrills, what tremblings, when Vanderdecken covers Lestelle with a cloak and she vanishes! What sentimental feelings when Mowdrey, returning, cries, "Lestelle! my love, my life! my—horror!—lost, lost! Help,

help!" What terror when to the spectators the following is presented—

[*Storm.—A mist begins to rise, through which Vanderdecken is seen crossing the sea in an open boat with Lestelle, from* L.U.E.—*the storm rages violently—the boat is dashed about upon the waves—it sinks suddenly with Vanderdecken and Lestelle—the* PHANTOM SHIP *appears (a la phantasmagorie) in a peal of thunder.—The stage and audience part of the Theatre in total darkness.*

INVISIBLE CHORUS, L.

Vanderdecken, come.
The bridal-bark, the spectre band,
Over sea and over land,
Wait to guide this captain's lady home.
Then, Vanderdecken, Vanderdecken, come.

Let us haste from these eerie realms where horror has its being, and pass to the domestic sphere where humbler joys and sorrows (though no less thrilling) have their home.

Here Isaac Pocock may first occupy our attention, some four of his numerous plays serving as representatives of various types. "*For England, Ho!*" (C.G. Dec. 1813) gives us the patriotic note with the injured hero, Enrico Altieri, who is wrongfully persecuted by Holstein (alias the Commandant), a thorough villain. *The Magpie, or the Maid?* (C.G. Sept. 1815), one of the many adaptations from a common French original, shows us the injured heroine. Poor little friendless Annette is accused of stealing a spoon and she cannot tell the truth because of her father's danger. It is soon discovered, of course, that a magpie was the culprit and that the spoon which Annette sold in order to get money for her father was her very, very own. Then *The Miller and his Men* (C.G. Oct. 1813) and *The Robber's Bride* (C.G. Oct. 1829)—these present various treatments of the brigandage theme, the latter, however, with interesting novelty of conception. In neither of these are the robbers, Schiller-wise, virtuous. The first shows us an apparently jovial and genial miller, who is in reality the cruel leader of a cruel troup of bandits. There is a faithful lover, Lothair, and a useful *deus ex machina* in Count Friberg, who returns just in time to

rescue innocence in distress. *The Robber's Bride* has a more original theme. Rose, the heroine, is married (few heroines in melodrama are married; the wedding bells are usually reserved for the close of act III) to a man who turns out to be a bold bad robber. Rose's long-lost father, Briarly, comes into the clutches of her husband; Rose succeeds in saving him, receives parental forgiveness and leaves her home of sin. This melodrama is interesting in many ways, chiefly because it shows how something at least of virtue was rising out of the domestic type. Rose's story is in one respect a problem story and, in spite of artificialities of treatment, points the way forward towards the domestic drama of late years. It is in the tradition of Heywood, Lillo and Moore; it indicates the coming of Robertson. Reading such a play as this, we realise that the melodrama, crude as it is, has more potential vitality than the long line of Elizabethan imitations which it will be our business to discuss later. Even a despised Pocock could rise out of the rut to produce something that had a direct relationship to life and that had in it at least the germ of something powerful. This impression of potential strength reappears in Buckstone's *Luke the Labourer, or, The Lost Son* (Adel. Oct. 1826). In spite of much poverty-stricken dialogue, there is something here that calls for our attention, in particular the characterisation of Luke, who, although the villain, is presented in an interesting manner. This man, a creature of evil circumstances and the victim of drink, is given a definite motive for his attempt to ruin Farmer Wakefield. Indeed his own account of his wife's death is rather effective, and deserves particular notice. "I ha' summut to say," he cries to Wakefield,

> I ha' summut to say, summut at my tongue's end—it must come out. Farmer, do you recollect when you sent me away fra' your sarvice? Do you recollect when I were starving for want o' work, and, because I were at times given to drink, you turn'd your back upon me. I ha' never been a man since that time.
>
> *Wakefield.* What, do you wish to rake up old affairs that ha' been gone by many a day?
>
> *Luke.* If it had been gone by a hundred years, and I alive, I should never ha' forgotten it: and I must and I will tell thee on't.

I never had the chance afore; but now it do all come fresh upon my brain, my heart do seem ready to burst wi' summut buried in it, and I cannot keep it down. You turn'd me away, and I had no character, because you said I was a drunkard. I were out o' work week after week, till I had not a penny in the world, nor a bit o' bread to put in mine or my wife's mouth. I then had a wife, but she sicken'd and died—yes, died!—all—all along o' you.

Wakefield. You never came to me in a right way.

Luke. She wouldn't let me go to parish, because she were daughter of as good a man as you were then; so we crept on little by little, and bad enough it were—but at last all things went cross; and at one time, when a bit hadn't been in my mouth for two days, I sat thinking, wi' my wife in my arms—she were ill, very ill—I saw her look at me wi' such a look as I shall never forget—she laid hold o' this hand, and, putting her long thin fingers all around it, said, "Luke, wouldna' the farmer give you sixpence if he thought I were dying o' want?" I said I'd try once more—I got up, to put her in a chair, when she fell, stone dead, down at my feet!

Clara. Oh, Luke! Luke!—for mercy's sake, no more—forgive him!

Luke [*after a pause*]. I were then quite ruin'd. I felt alone in the world. I stood looking on her white face near an hour, and did not move from the spot an inch; but, when I *did* move, it were wi' my fist clenched in the air, while my tongue, all parch'd and dry, curs'd a curse, and swore that, if I had not my revenge, I wish'd I might fall as stiff and as dead as she that lay before me.

All the play, of course, is not written in this strain. Clara is nearly seduced by the wicked squire who is in league with Luke, and the noble hero, Charles Maydew, comes just in time to save her and her father from ruin. This is in the regular melodramatic strain—but the presentation of Luke is not. The latter shows inventiveness on the part of the dramatist and makes ample atonement for the poverty of the rest. Once more we come upon what is at least potential strength in the domestic branch of the minor and illegitimate theatre.

The movements, naturally, towards newer things were but tentative in this age. It was easier to write along the well-worn lines than to strike out along new paths, and most of the domestic melodramas, like Kenney's *Ella Rosenberg*

(D.L. Nov. 1807), which tells how Rosenberg has been immured by Mountfort, who has designs on his wife, and whose evil aims are defeated by the noble Elector, ring the changes on stock themes. If brigandage is dealt with, it is usually introduced, either to show distressed virtue driven to extremities or to provide a nice contrast with innocence. In Bird's *The Smuggler's Daughter* (S.W. Oct. 1835) the smuggler is Anker Bruce, whose daughter Margaret loves Lieutenant Paul Vincent. Bruce is found murdered and Vincent, accused of the crime, is about to be executed, when Gilbert, the real perpetrator of the deed, now stung by conscience, dashes in to receive the fire of the mariners. The only interesting feature here is the struggle in Margaret's mind occasioned by her love of her father and her love of Vincent. A trifling touch of novelty appears, too, in *My Poll and My Partner Joe* (Surrey, Sept. 1835) by J. T. Haines. Here Harry Halyard, after falling into the clutches of villains, is pressed for the navy. He returns after many years and finds that his old sweetheart, whose image has been always in his mind, thinking him dead, has married his faithful partner Joe. After a scene of conflicting emotions, old Joe dies and presumably his widow will marry Halyard. This *Enoch Arden* theme is treated with a certain psychological insight which again indicates, even though but vaguely, the possibilities inherent in the domestic type. We must remember, too, that by means of the melodrama the whole sphere of the serious play was being enlarged. Such dramas as Moncrieff's *The Scamps of London; or the Cross Roads of Life* (S.W. Nov. 1843) and Dillon's *The Mysteries of Paris. A Romance of the Rich and Poor* (Marylebone, Sept. 1844), carry pathetic sentiment and occasionally would-be-tragic situation far away from the higher fields these occupied in poetic plays. It is true that this type of melodrama is mostly French in origin—even *The Scamps of London*, described as 'A National, Local, Characteristic, Metropolitan, Melodramatic Drama of the Day," is derived from *Les Bohémiens de Paris* (Théâtre de l'Ambigu Comique, Sept. 1843)—but, whatever its origin, its importance remains. The stories are

poor, perhaps. In Moncrieff's play there is a stock villain Devereux, a stock hero Frank, a stock heroine Louisa and a stock comic friend Bob Yorkney. Dillon has a hero in Prince Rodolphe who rescues innocence in distress and finds that the said innocence, Fleur de Marie, is his long-lost daughter. With him Mike Murphy provides the comic relief. The scenes displayed, however, take us to new realms and we feel prepared to recognise in those scenes another instrument, slight as it might be, by means of which drama succeeded in the following half-century in freeing itself from old fetters and in finding a new emancipated path.

We need not stay longer with the melodrama. Beyond variations in setting, the other specimens of this type have not much to offer us that we cannot find in the few selected examples. Nor is there need to attempt any formal differentiation of the work of the various writers—Holcroft, Pocock, Brough, Moncrieff, Campbell and the rest. All took the same models; all worked to type; all penned their pieces with no thought of literary glory. We may say that one had a better style and another a more inventive gift, that one was prolific and another penned merely a few pieces of this kind, but the distinctions, after all, are slight and the labour of making the critical analysis would be labour lost. At the same time the presence of sameness and of unoriginality must not cause us to overlook entirely this type of drama. Apart from the fact noted above that the domestic melodrama possessed certain premonitions of future domestic triumphs, we have to remember that in this type consisted all that was vital and popular in the theatrical world of the time. We may smile at the follies of the melodramatic scene—although, perhaps, people in glass-houses should not throw stones; we flock today to our cinemas to see films built according to plan precisely similar to that beloved in the early nineteenth century. And, besides this thought, there is another which should make us pause. Gazing drearily on the long array of "unacted" dramas and of "poetic" dramas put forward by well-meaning littérateurs of the age, I personally feel convinced that, had I lived in these decades, I should have loved

better the struggling actors at the minor theatres than the lordly potentates legitimately wedded at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, that I should have been in complete sympathy with H. S. Leigh, and should have firmly endorsed his advice to contemporaries:

> Look always on the Surrey side
> For true dramatic art.
> The road is long—the river wide—
> But frequent busses start
> From Charing Cross and Gracechurch Street,
> (An inexpensive ride;)
> So, if you want an evening's treat,
> O seek the Surrey side.

II. *Farces*

With the melodrama naturally goes the farce. A nineteenth century audience wanted to laugh; it wanted its comic friend in the melodramatic spectacle, and it wanted, besides, a good jolly brisk absurd after-piece to which it might give itself up in genuine whole-hearted enjoyment. The explanation of the truly enormous number of short plays, of which melodramas, farces, comic operas and pantomimes formed by far the largest part, was the lengthy return made in those years for money paid at the box-office. Performances started at 6.30 or 7 and lasted till midnight or after; special arrangements were made for those who, preferring to have a leisurely meal at a near-by tavern, did not come to the theatre till 9. Under these conditions there was therefore ample time for a three hour play, a farce and a pantomime all on the same evening. The audience demanded, and got, them all; demanded, too, and saw that it got, not stale pieces but such as bore upon them the stamp of novelty. Occasionally a particularly successful melodrama such as Fitzball's *Jonathan Bradford* (Surrey, June 1833) would continue running for months on end, occasionally a specially popular farce would reappear year after year in a theatre's repertory, but normally this flotsam and jetsam bobbed momentarily on the theatrical waves and sank without hope of recovery.

It is not strange, therefore, that the farces, like the melodramas, should be "made to order." There is but small real ingenuity in any one and much was left to the actors who were to interpret them. To what has already been said on this subject[1], there may be added a typical passage culled from *The London Magazine* for Oct. 1823. A critic there, writing of a Haymarket performance, declares that he looks upon

> Liston's *face* in the light of a national misfortune. We consider, what we must own to be his happy infelicity of feature, a serious injury to the public stage. We are decidedly of the opinion that by the admirable scenic effect of his physiognomy, he has inadvertently precipitated the fall of drama amongst us, or rather, that the last blow has been given to English comedy, by the exquisite comicality of his visage....Writers for the stage, depending on this phenomenon of a phyz, neglect all legitimate means of pleasing, all rules whatsoever by which comedy is distinguished from the very lowest species of buffoonery,—that which depends on grimace....The whole endeavour of our playwrights is directed to exhibit, not their own wit, if they happen to possess such a rare commodity, but Liston's face under new and ludicrous aspects; the sum of their energies is applied to present us with, not a fair exaggeration of human nature, as it is found displayed in the various follies and foibles of mankind, but some fantastical mockery, some gross caricature of real existence; or, rather some burlesque extravaganza, which has no prototype in real existence, where Liston, in a pair of *unmentionables* coming half-way down his legs, a waistcoat of the pattern of my grandmother's chinz bedgown, and a flaxen wig with the tail turn'd up behind, shall set the audience in a roar without opening his lips.

This was at the Haymarket, a small house where Liston's face could be seen; at the larger theatres, so we may well imagine, broad farcical action of the lowest type was more favoured; and both were equally inimical to a true comic spirit. Action, then, and not witty words, was what everyone demanded.

Yet even farce requires dialogue. Here again the broadest effects were aimed at. None of Congreve's gracious periods could charm this audience; none of Farquhar's delicate

[1] See *supra*, pp. 50–1.

innuendoes. The language was rough in the stylistic sense, if ultra-pure in the moral. Puns of the broadest kind obviously made their appeal. Open any comic piece of the period and these puns stare at you. Says Pacolet in *Valentine and Orson* (Lyc. Dec. 1844):

> He's hard at work inventing a new plot,

to which Oberon answers:

> *Invent* a plot! You're wrong in what you've stated.
> Plots ain't invented now: they're all translated.

An air sung by Orpheus in Planché's *Olympic Devils; or, Orpheus and Eurydice* (Olym. Dec. 1831) runs thus:

> Voulez-vous danser, while I play,
> Trees make bows and stump away,
> Lawns and meadows dance the hay,
> And rocks to reel are fain, sir?
>
> Rivers join the *country*-dance,
> Streamlets in quad-*rills* advance,
> Fountains cool
> Glide through la *poole*,
> And pastorale the plain, sir;
>
> Voulez-vous danser, while I play,
> Panthers paws-de-deux essay,
> And lordly lions waltz away
> With all their might and *mane*, sirs.

The two examples given above are from extravaganzas, but prose farce was just as full of the puns. Thus in Coyne's *How to Settle Accounts with your Laundress* (Adel. July 1847), Widgetts has a long conversation with Mary the laundress in which he begs her not "to wring" his "heart and mangle" his "affections like that," while later in the same play the following speech is put into the mouth of Brown the hairdresser:

> I'm an 'airdresser, ma'am, my name's Brown, and I've a professional engagement at the Opera House, where I cultivate romance and ringlets amongst the ladies of the ballet. There I first beheld the lovely Cheri Bounce, the very image of the wax Wenus in my shop window. I loved her, not for her foreign grace, but for her native hair. Oh, she had such a head of real hair;

and oh, the showers of tears and the bottles of Macassar oil that I've poured upon it nobody would believe! Well, I toasted her for two years regularly, and at length she consented to become *Brown*. Well, we were to be married, I had bought my wedding suit, when this fellow Widgetts, came to take the curl out of my happiness. We quarrelled about him last Saturday, and grew so warm that we've been cool ever since.

Much as I am tempted, for I have a partiality for puns, I must leave this aspect of the farces of the time. A detailed survey of their other qualities is impossible within the limits of this volume, for the farces are as numerous as the melodramas; once more, therefore, a glance at some of the better and more typical examples of the type must serve to indicate the characteristics of all.

It may not be unwise to start with that neglected *jeu d'esprit* of poor Charles Lamb, *Mr. H*—— (D.L. Dec. 1806). Often have been quoted Elia's words concerning his fond hopes and aspirations before the production, his bitter disappointment when the many-headed serpent hissed forth what was, in England, an irrevocable doom. *Mr. H*—— well deserves modern revival[1]. Its style is easy and there are two truly excellent scenes, that between Mr H—— and the landlord and that between the former and Melesinda. The comic pathos in the latter could hardly be bettered. The whole piece, with a certain Wildesque grace although characteristically humorous in the Lamb manner, might well prove a modern success. Yet there is this contemporary damnation to be explained. Professor Brander Matthews has a "playwriting" theory that Lamb has failed because he conceals too long the name of his hero from the audience; but this theory cannot be truly maintained when we note that both at New York and at Philadelphia the farce was a notable success. Not a genuine fault in structure but two elements calculated to arouse contemporary dissatisfaction militated against it. The first was its finer tone. The language and the humour were both too subtle for the larger London theatres of its day; *Mr. H*—— demands an intimate playhouse. The

[1] Since writing this paragraph I see that Lamb's farce has been revived with great success by a body of amateurs.

second was the name of the hero. In spite of brutality and coarseness in plenty, the audiences of Lamb's time were becoming, not only prurient, but suspicious of anything that seemed "vulgar." When Mr H—— reveals himself as Hogsflesh, the very name, we must feel, grated on the supersensitive ears of the spectators and the hissing began. The faults lay in the audience of the time and not in any inherent error on Lamb's part. It may be confessed that the theme of *Mr. H——* is a trifle thin, but for its other virtues the farce should have been popular had these two things not caused it to be damned.

Most of the other farce-writers were careful to avoid the pitfalls into which Lamb fell. Their pieces are broad and rough in style, in expression refusing to admit anything that has the slightest tincture of vulgarity. Usually their plots are of the flimsiest. Mrs Pennyfarthing gives a masquerade in Pocock's *Cent. per Cent. or, The Masquerade* (C.G. May 1823), and her husband turns up in fancy dress unexpectedly. Ledger, in the same author's *The Omnibus! or, A Convenient Distance!* (C.G. Dec. 1830), hating visitors, takes a house ten miles from London. The fun, of course, consists in the constant succession of would-be week-enders, added to the gaucheries of Pat Rooney, the well-meaning but awkward Irish servant. These Irishmen were very popular and furnished the basis of many a farce, their stage follies ekeing out more than one dull plot and mitigating much wretched technique. Their presence, and that of other similar types, added to the consciousness that they would be fittingly interpreted, led the dramatists to write ever more and more carelessly. Here is a fairly typical exposition culled from *Each for Himself* (D.L. 1816):

ACT I.—SCENE I.

A Street.

Enter Sir HARRY FREEMAN *and Young* CANISTER, *meeting.*

Can. What!—Sir Harry Freeman!

Sir H. What! Tom Canister! Old college acquaintance, how are you? (*shake hands*).

Can. How d'ye do, my noble Baronet.—Just arrived in town, I suppose?

Sir H. Yes, Tom, here I am again at the starting post of pleasure, and eager for the race.—Well, how go Bohea, Twankay, and Congo?

Can. Nay, confound you, Sir Harry, don't put one out of countenance.

Sir H. Are you ashamed of your calling?—What, man, of a business that brings you in each year a brace of thousands!

Can. The income, certainly, is not to be despised—but then only recollect, Sir Harry, a college education unfits one—

Sir H. For enjoying a snug fortune, hey!—No, no,—stick to your Tea Chests, Tom.—Woo washerwomen and old maids, instead of the muses.

Can. Faugh!—don't mention it—Do you know I think of changing my name, merely to get rid of the odious superscription on my letters—"For Mr. *T.* Canister."

Sir H. Ha! ha!—poor Tom—Oh, pray are you as great an orator as ever, Tom?

Can. Aye, now I see you want me to deny the little reputation I obtained in that way.

Sir H. No, no, that would be unreasonable—I wish you rather to flatter yourself, for, 'pon my soul, I can't.

Can. I see you are the same satirical dog as ever.

Sir H. (*looking out*).—Hey!—An Angel!—Beautiful! By heavens, incomparable!—Curse that opaque old woman!—hey, turned the corner—oh, oh! (*runs out*).

Can. (*calls*). Sir Harry!

Sir H. (*without*). Good day, Tom.

Can. Why, he's running after my aunt, and cousin Rosa, whom he never saw in his life before! Ha! ha!—this is a good joke—I'll follow, to see how they'll take his fine speeches—Ha! ha!

The Ha, ha's! have lost their flavour now, and after this array of information gratuitously flung at the audience we well know what threadbare situations and dialogue we must expect.

The writers of farce are numerous in this time and it may be well to glance at one or two selected works from those who were most prolific or most popular. Charles Dance was both prolific and popular; from his writings the comedietta, *Delicate Ground*; *or*, *Paris in* 1793 (Lyc. Nov. 1849) may be taken here. This little play shows well the peculiar

combination, fairly common in that age, of latent potentiality and frigid, groping structure. The opening, like that of *Each for Himself*, does not promise much. Pauline enters weeping and kissing a letter alternately and together; then she speaks —the comments, naturally, are mine—

> Pauline, [this is to let the audience know her name] what is it that you did? [to arouse expectancy] Alas! that even when one is alone one cannot escape the searching inquiries of conscience. [sentimental appeal] Yet, after all, is not conscience a less hard taskmaster than a cold, dissembling, ironical, tyrannical husband? No doubt, no doubt. Know then, good conscience, [she means, but does not say, good spectators] that I kissed this letter, and know further, that this letter is *not* from my husband. [a very blind conscience this] Nay, start not! It is a letter of other days, and it is from him who should have been my husband—from him who, had he lived, would have been my husband; from the object of my early, my deep affection; from the long-lamented Alphonse—De—Hush! My husband!

The development, however, belies this beginning. Alphonse De Grandier is not dead, and the pair are about to elope, when citizen Sangfroid's coolness succeeds in exposing their romantic follies. Here is farce undoubtedly with the basis of a serious thought, and we learn once more, how, out of the minor "illegitimate" drama of the time, higher ideals were being formed. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in Dance we have the far-off ancestor of Mr Bernard Shaw. That which characterises all Mr Shaw's writings is the attack, direct or implied, at romantic assumptions. In *Man and Superman* it is the convention of the love-chase that is dealt with; in *How He Lied to Her Husband* it is the eternal triangle; in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* it is the nineteenth century picture of "the Bard." Now, while it would be utter folly to suggest that in Charles Dance we find anything at all comparable with Mr Shaw's brilliant wit and destructive rationalism, we may, I think, discern in the earlier writer's work the operation of that critical mood which ultimately leads to the work of Mr Shaw. This is made plain when we turn to the last section of the play. Alphonse has made his appearance and has succeeded in fluttering little Pauline's

heart. Sangfroid, instead of flying into a romantic passion, offers her a divorce, and this rather troubles the romantic lover:

Sangfroid. Ah, there you are again! Written your letter? That's right! The carriage is ordered, and the Citizen Pauline will be ready directly.

Alphonse. Would you object to allowing me two or three minutes conversation with you in private?

Sangfroid. Certainly not. Pray go on.

Alphonse. Thank you! But the fact is, the questions I wish to ask you are of so delicate a nature that I hardly know where to begin.

Sangfroid. At the beginning, I should say.

Alphonse. Yes, I know; but that's the difficulty.

Sangfroid. Then try the middle, or the end. You have no time to spare.

Alphonse. You—you—you don't love—that is, of course, I don't wish you to love her now—but I mean you *didn't* love Pauline.

Sangfroid. I shall not contradict you.

Alphonse. Yes, but it seems to me that you couldn't bear her. Now as she has become my wife—

Sangfroid. Not yet, she's my wife at present.

Alphonse. We'll say "our wife."

Sangfroid. Excuse me, I don't mean to be rude, but I don't like the partnership. Call her Pauline.

Alphonse. As you please, but you will think it but natural that I should feel curious, not to say anxious, to know the cause of your aversion. You can have nothing to say against her personal appearance.

Sangfroid. Nothing.

Alphonse. Nor against her numerous virtues!

Sangfroid. No. Yes, stop; there is one virtue you will have to teach her.

Alphonse. What is that?

Sangfroid. Fidelity to her husband.

Alphonse. What, sir, do you imagine Pauline capable—

Sangfroid. Upon my life, you're a treat! You supposed her capable when you asked her to run away from me.

The result is that Alphonse's ardours cool as he nears his romantic goal:

Alphonse. Any communication you have to make to her now, must go through me.

Sangfroid. Must it? Then I have a favourite sword I wish to send her. Would you like *that* to go through you?

Alphonse. No; of course I don't mean anything of that sort.

Sangfroid. It's not very easy to know what you mean. But what I mean is this, you have come here like a thief, as you are—

Alphonse. A thief, sir?

Sangfroid. Don't interrupt me. You'll find I'm quite right. Like a thief as you are—to rob me of my wife. Are you ready, now, on the instant—that is to say, the instant the forms of law are complied with—to make her yours?

Alphonse. Well, I don't know.

Sangfroid. You don't know! But you must know. Do you suppose that I'll allow you to disturb the peace of a quiet, well-regulated family in this manner, to deprive a lady of a husband who is worthy the name of a husband, without being prepared to offer her the poor consolation of such a paltry, contemptible substitute as you are?

There is here, unquestionably, an interesting treatment of a domestic theme, and in it one can see how, in the very midst of romantic flamboyance, a spirit of rationalism was rising to react against the false, the rosy-coloured, conventions of a society that had long since ceased to look upon facts. It is to be confessed that portions of *Delicate Ground* are sentimentally conceived and that the exposition is thoroughly wretched; but there remains that other quality, shown in the two passages quoted above, which links the treatment of the theme to some of the prevailing tendencies in twentieth century drama[1].

These last two examples show well between what limits the farces of the time moved. It is true that a certain definite chronological advance can be traced, but absolute chronology in reality aids us little. Constantly in these decades we see the clash of opposing elements, now dominant the absurdities and the ludicrous situations, now a quality which points forward towards a more thoughtful and deliberate form of art. The follies, of course, are the more numerous and noticeable, although even the follies at times take on a

[1] It matters little whether this play or another is of French extraction or not. The fact remains that we have this attitude apparent before 1850 and expressed dramatically in the theatre.

charm all their own. *Five Hundred Pounds Reward; or, Dick Turpin the Second* (Lyc. Jan. 1847) displays the typically bustling plots of the period. Mr Dumbleton, a foolish old Dogberry, expects Dick Turpin to give himself up to justice. Valentine Honeyball (played by Wigan) is cheated into pretending he is the famous highwayman and has the uncomfortable experience of falling in with a real band of robbers, who at once accept him as their leader. It is obvious that the plot here was designed for the displayal of acting alone; nothing but the broadly ludicrous and the boisterously active is granted admission. *A Model of a Wife* (Lyc. Jan. 1845), with its punning title, is of the same character, presenting a rough and tumble plot which depends mainly upon Stump's jealousy of Bonnefoi. For the most part Douglas Jerrold's farces belong to the same genre, with, often, the addition of a semi-sentimental flavour. Thus *Gertrude's Cherries; or, Waterloo in 1835* (C.G. Sept. 1842) has the rougher element in the characters of Blague, Mr Crossbone and Mrs Crossbone, while the emotional element is freely provided for in the discovery by Willoughby of his long-lost son in Guibert and his long-lost grand-daughter in Gertrude. This seems a case of carrying ancestral discoveries just a trifle far back. To exploit ridiculous situations, too, and to provide material for low-comedy actors, Jerrold wrote his famous *Paul Pry* (Cob. Nov. 1827), which, like the *Sir Martin Mar-all* of a previous age, made constant fun out of the meddlesome and intruding qualities of its hero. Peculiarly enough, yet explainably if we take into account the theatres of the time, even Planché, so neat and witty in his revues and extravaganzas, trusts in his farces to action alone. In *Hold your Tongue* (Lyc. March 1849) all the laughter comes from the embarrassing situation of Lady Ryder who has secretly attended a masquerade and who comes, through circumstances, to see the folly of her carelessly premeditated action. The only farce of this prolific author which catches a gleam from his extravaganza tinselling and which suggests a novel purpose is *A Romantic Idea* (Lyc. March 1849), where a young German author, who has come to a village in search

of literary material, spends his night in a ruin and has a most uncomfortable dream of a demon-jester and similar awe-inspiring sprites. The embodiment of the dream-figures has a certain modern note, but this piece stands unfortunately alone among Planché's kindred works. Equivocal situations and threadbare characters are once more exploited in Mrs Planché's *The Welsh Girl* (Olym. Dec. 1833) which tells of an ancient story wherein a girl (Julia) secretly married to an only son (Alfred) wins the affections of her father-in-law (Sir Owen Griffiths) by pretending to be an innocent little stranger. The intrigues of lovers and their servants naturally provided a good deal of comic subject-matter. Sometimes the tricks are all imposed on the foolish old relics of Pantalone and Graziano; sometimes, as in S. Penley's *The Sleeping-Draught* (D.L. April 1818), the intriguers are caught for a time in their own traps. In the last-mentioned play Rinaldo adores Francesca while his servant Popolino loves Nonna. By mistake Popolino swallows a potent sleeping-draught made up by Doctor Vincolo and is carried off as dead in a chest. The miserly Farmer Bruno finds the chest and carries it off home. The equivocal situations which arise when Popolino wakens may be imagined.

More of sentimentalism appears in the productions of R. C. Dallas, whose *Not at Home* (Lyc. Nov. 1809) may be taken as representative. "How delightful it is to expose villainy and rescue innocence!" exclaims Fitzalban in good old eighteenth century style, and his remark may well serve as a motto for this story of Lord Sedley's evil practices, Fitzalban's heroism and Lovell's jealousy. Sentimentalism of a different kind is flaunted before us in Buckstone's *A Rough Diamond* (Lyc. Nov. 1847). Once more we seem to be breathing the air of 1780 when we find the native but unpolished honesty of the country wife Margery deeply contrasted with the refined duplicity of Lady Plato and Captain Blenheim. Rousseau still lays his hand on many a dramatic work of the period.

One after another these pieces were brought, in huddled confusion, upon the various stages, sentimentalism, bustling

action, broad jests, atrocious puns making up for any poverty in invention or style. Heavy contrasts were beloved. Take your hypocritical Puritans (a stage mother-in-law and an Aminadab Sleek) and show a good-natured husband, yearning for brighter things, in their toils, and your farce—in this instance *The Serious Family* (H.[2] Oct. 1849) by Morris Barnett—is done. Heap together a group of ridiculous "humours"—Sam, a Yorkshire waiter, Fainwou'd, a wealthy lout, Miss Laurelia Durable, a spinster, Diddler, a kind of Jingle—and you have made a popular success. Kenney knew the truth of this when he composed *Raising the Wind* (C.G. Nov. 1803). Sometimes you might, with due circumspection, sail somewhat close to the wind and introduce a situation bordering on the *risqué* side, telling, for example, how a maid (Maria) poses as the wife of a friend (Selborne) in order to deceive an old man (Sir Mark Chase). Provided you do not overstep the mark and merely introduce distracting ludicrosities such as the lamentable position of a stranger (Alfred Highflyer) who is informed that a country house is a lunatic asylum, your play will be successful: Tom Morton's *A Roland for an Oliver* (C.G. April 1819), built on this plan, proved so successful that his publisher could declare that "no Farce ever excited more genuine laughter, and tumultuous applause, than this has done[1]."

The disguises indulged in in earlier comic drama, exaggerated and made more ridiculous, appear in these pieces and evidently caused constant merriment. Amelia in Moncrieff's *Tarnation Strange; or, More Jonathans* (Strand, Aug. 1838) is about to be married to a boaster, Jonathan Jonah Goliah Bang, and is saved by the astute Cornet Wimbleton, who assumes a multitude of disguises. Obviously that which pleased the eighteenth century still pleases this. Moncrieff and others harp again and again on the same theme. In *The Winterbottoms! or My Aunt, the Dowager* (Strand, June 1837) both Frank Jekyll and his man Jeffrey impersonate the Dowager Lady Winterbottom, the former succeeding eventually in winning the hand of Celestine. The equivocal

[1] See original octavo edition of 1819.

situations may be left to the imagination; they anticipate by half a century those which still excite laughter in *Charley's Aunt*. It is obvious that these, as well as such farces as J. T. Allingham's *The Weathercock* (D.L. Nov. 1805) where Tristram Fickle moves from profession to profession, give ample scope for low-comedy performances. Very typical in this way is Somerset's *The Day after the Fair* (Olym. Jan. 1829). Here Old Fidget, the noise-hating ancient who carries his ancestry back to Jonson's *Epicoene*, is presented to us in a little cottage which he has recently bought and where he seeks for peaceful retirement. Jerry and Polly covet this cottage, and to gain it from him they impersonate between them a variety of types—a noisy cobbler, a ballad-singer, a drummer, a French singer, a maniac, a washerwoman and a theatrical manageress. One might compare with this Joseph Lunn's *Lofty Projects; or, Arts in an Attic* (C.G. April 1825), written expressly for the actor Yates, designed to show him as Versatile imitating a number of other characters. Or one might take T. E. Hook's *The Trial by Jury* (H.^{2} May 1811). In this play Sanford disguises himself as a gardener and Milford as a footman in order to oust the parentally-favoured Wilkins. Complications of an intricate sort arise from the fact that, while Sanford knows the footman to be Milford, Milford thinks Sanford is really the gardener. As a final example we may turn to Boucicault's *Used Up* (H.^{2} Feb. 1844), derived from a French play, *L'homme blasé*. Here a different explanation is given for the disguises. Sir Charles Coldstream is thoroughly bored; seeking for excitement, he finds it in a scuffle with the brawny Ironbrace. They both fall into a river and are thought dead. Sir Charles, however, escapes drowning, disguises himself as Joe, a ploughboy, and succeeds in winning the heart of Mary, the charming niece of the crotchety old farmer, Wurzel. As is clear, we are really not so far from the present day; the outlines of this plot are quite evidently reproduced in Arnold Bennett's modern comedy, *The Great Adventure*.

The farces of this time have not much to offer us of real intrinsic merit. Some are written in a sprightly style; but

even the best display a certain mechanical structure. Most of them were written for low-comedy actors who could "put across" almost anything, and consequently there is generally evident a carelessness on the part of the authors both as regards plot and form. Old themes are constantly being refurbished, and stock situations occur with irritating frequency. We may say that neither in regard to literary form nor to inventiveness did these farces bring anything of permanent worth to the theatre: yet such a judgment may hardly be final or unqualified. Here at least was a world of hearty laughter; here was a type of drama which carried on that tradition for broad merriment which can be traced back to Elizabethan days, and further. The farce stands alongside of the melodrama as the most characteristic and most popular play-form produced in the age; and as such it demands our close attention, whether our aim be to recapture and explain the theatrical tendencies of these decades or to follow the fortunes of our drama from the eighteenth century on to the modern period.

III. *Burlettas and Comic Operas*

Many of those pieces which I have included in the last section were called by a variety of names. Sometimes the old-fashioned "Farce" stood starkly on the title-page or in the printed bill, but, more commonly, a desire for novelty led the dramatists to diversify their nomenclature. "Comic Drama" and "Comic Piece" are not far out of the ordinary, but terms such as "Farcetta" and "Comedietta" are new and display the movement towards individuality of classification. That many of these terms meant nothing definite or precise cannot be denied; there seems, for example, to be no distinction between a farcetta and a farce. But in general this tendency marks a realisation on the part of the dramatists that new forms were springing into being. Constantly in drama there has been a break-down of the original "kinds," and tragi-comedies, farces, interludes, and the like have pushed their way forward and even ousted regular tragedy and comedy

from the boards. This movement towards novelty of form, however, was never so marked as in this early nineteenth century. Perhaps the cause was romantic freedom, but, whatever the reason, we see on all sides the evolution of dramatic types which were either entirely new or but dimly adumbrated in preceding years. From five-act comedy of the Sheridan mould down to the shortest of farcical interludes there existed a whole series of intermediate forms, and the diversified nomenclature marks the endeavour of the playwrights to indicate at what precise stage or level their particular works stood. Comedietta, for instance, indicates that the author was aiming rather at a purely comic than at a farcical effect, but that his play was not of a full five-act form. Although it is in error in imagining that the name "comedietta" is "newly-coined," a paragraph in *The Reader* for April 8, 1865, gives a fairly clear explanation of this title:

> A comedietta is a newly-coined term for a new species of drama. A name was required for that dwarf species of comedy that is not so broad as farce, nor so light as vaudeville, nor so tragic as melodrama.... It ought, being a species, to be complete in itself, and not merely two or three scenes belonging to a larger comedy.

The comedietta, or *petite comédie* as sometimes it was alternatively styled, in this age when five-act comedy was mostly sentimental and farce lorded it over the lighter stage, marks a tentative endeavour to return to a social comedy, of diminutive proportions and midway between a farce of Garrick and a comedy of Congreve.

The Reader mentions as a still lighter form, the vaudeville. The name, it is said, derived originally from a *chanson du Vau* (or *val*) *de Vire*, a district in Normandy, and was applied in the sixteenth century to a certain type of pleasant, generally popular, ditty. In the nineteenth century the word was extended in meaning to include a "pièce de théâtre où le dialogue est entremêlé de couplets faits sur des airs de vaudeville, ou empruntés à des opéras-comiques[1]." To

[1] Definition in Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*. The various types of *vaudeville-farce*, *comédie-vaudeville*, *vaudeville anecdotique* and *vaudeville intrigué* are dealt with by Eugène Lintilhac in vol. v. of his *Histoire générale du théâtre en France* (1910).

England the word came, in this secondary sense, about the thirties of the century. In 1833 Lord Lytton used it in close connection with farce and "lighter comedy[1]," while, a few years later, Moncrieff was commenting upon it in his prefaces. In *The Kiss and the Rose, or Love in the Nursery Grounds* (Vauxhall 1827), taken from the French *La servante justifiée*, the latter considered it necessary to show how the form "differs from the Burletta." This point of distinction he finds in the fact that the vaudeville was "a dramatic story in verse, rather than prose, illustrated and carried on by means of the songs and melodies of the day rather than original compositions." This commentary he continues in the preface to *Bringing Home the Bride! or the Husband's First Journey* (Adel. March 1831), derived from *Le Voyage de la Mariée*. Here he asserts that the first of the type in England was *The King of the Alps* (Adel. Jan. 1831). The vaudeville plays an important part in the refining of the English stage, and deserves to be studied in close connection with the dramatic efforts of Planché and with the endeavours of the Mathews-Vestris managements. With the vaudeville, too, must be considered the *revue*, a dramatic form which, important as it was and is, has not found a place in the *New English Dictionary*. The *revue*, as its name indicates, attempts to present in a light form a survey, mingled with good-humoured criticism, of recent dramatic events; in this way it is closely connected with the extravaganza-burlesque. The *locus criticus* regarding its history in England is a passage in J. R. Planché's *Recollections* (1872), where he is discussing his earlier activities. "My theatrical labours in the year 1825," he says,

> terminated with the production at the Adelphi, then under the management of Messrs. Terry and Yates, of a one-act piece on the 12th of December, entitled "Success; or, a Hit if you Like it," which I only mention because it was the first attempt in this country to introduce that class of entertainment so popular in Paris called "Revue," and of which, with one solitary exception, I believe I have been the sole contributor to the English stage[2].

[1] *Godolphin*, chap. ix; quoted in the *N.E.D.*

[2] *Op. cit.* i. 73.

In the introduction to *Success* as presented in the first volume of Planché's *Extravaganzas* (1879) the author notes that he has never found a convenient English equivalent for the French name, and gives as his definition "a 'Review' of the dramatic productions of the past season." In *Success* there are thus presented before Fashion, his daughter Success, and his officers, Pshaw and Fiddle-de-dee, a whole series of dramatic caricatures—Zamiel, from the English Opera, Brutus from Drury Lane, Polichinelle from Covent Garden, Paul Pry from the Haymarket and Long Tom Coffin from the Adelphi. The Press, the "Privy Council of Fashion, as *suit*-ably represented as the Wardrobe will admit upon so *press*-ing an occasion," naturally form an important part of the spectacle.

Success was printed among the *Extravaganzas*, and this term, extravaganza, also requires a note or two of comment. Derived from the Italian *stravaganza*, the word explains itself, and serves to indicate at one and the same time a wide field of nineteenth century dramatic activity and a general tendency of the age. As we glance over the bills and theatrical advertisements of the time, we must inevitably be struck by the composite descriptions appended to many a play, highly reminiscent of Polonius' famous divisions. This in itself indicates the "romantic" movements of the age, the neo-classical "kinds," as we have seen, being ousted in favour of novelties of all sorts. In addition to this, we note the rapid growth of two apparently contradictory tendencies—the realistic and the fantastic. The first is symbolised in the domestic melodrama, the second finds typical expression in the extravaganza. Apparently the first play to be given this name was Planché's *High, Low, Jack, and the Game; or, The Card Party* (Olym. Sept. 1833), which was styled "A Most Extravagant Extravaganza" or (this was for the sake of the Lord Chamberlain) "Rum-antic Burletta." The *dramatis personae* are the playing cards, and the settings were evidently of a rich and fantastic order. In the programme we read of

A *deal* of Machinery by Mr Mackintosh. The properties *made*

and *cut* by Mr Buckley. The new scenery (painted by Mr Gordon) will be *dealt out* in regular order.

The extravaganza had a glorious career in the thirties and forties of the century. Usually it adopted themes of an allegorical or classic kind, but its looseness of style also suited the presentation of such exaggerated and plot-less "realistic" scenes as are given in W. T. Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry; or, Life in London* (Adel. Nov. 1821). This "whimsical melange" as Cumberland's editor, "D.G.," calls it, exists simply for the purpose of providing half-fantastic, half-naturalistic glimpses of scenes of London Life—the "Chaffing Crib in Corinthian House, Tattersal's, Hyde Park Corner, Almack's, Tom Cribb's Parlour, Temple Bar, Fleet Street, a "fashionable Hell, at the west-end of the Town," "Back Slums in the Holy Land" and others. Whether realistic or romantic, however, it was always the "extravaganza," and, retaining its flourish, passed on vital traditions which, fifty years later, were taken over by Gilbert and Sullivan in their famous Savoy operas.

Of all the terms employed during this period, the burletta is by far the most difficult to define. In the eighteenth century the term was introduced with a certain exact significance[1], but by the beginning of the following century it had come to mean nothing but a play which could with safety be given at a minor, or unpatented theatre. "Ask now," says George Colman the Younger, "what is a burletta, and you will be told it is one thing at one theatre, and another at another." He notes that the lawyers failed to provide a definition, but himself finds he cannot consider it other than "as a drama in rhyme, and which is entirely musical; a short comic piece, consisting of recitative and singing, wholly accompanied, more or less, by the Orchestra[2]." This, however, as Colman himself observes, was by no means a definition capable of covering the vast number of plays included under the one title; confusion reigned in the minds of spectators, managers

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 194.
[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 397–8.

and officials. Writing to Colman on Feb. 22, 1824, the Lord Chamberlain thought that

> Surely a Burletta must be interspersed throughout with songs at least, whatever may be the other characteristics of a Burletta[1],

while Colman, answering his chief on the 24th of the month, displayed equal uncertainty:

> I think you may fairly say, that it is easy sometimes to say what is not a Burletta, tho' it may be difficult to define what a Burletta is, according to the legal acceptation of the Term, Burletta, Five or six songs in a Piece of one Act for example, where the songs make a natural part of the Piece (*and not forced into an acting piece*, to qualify it as a Burletta) may be perhaps considered so far a Burletta, as not to be refused by the Chamberlain, tho' there always remains the question, whether a Burletta must not be in verse, and the whole sung, not *said*; which makes the question dangerous.

In spite of this confusion, it is fairly easy to see how the extension of the term began and to what it led. In origin the burletta was not a minor or "illegitimate" type at all, but had begun in the patent theatres of the late eighteenth century. Minor theatres, however, were arising, and at first these specialised in the "spectacle," with plentiful music and printed flags for the text[2], but soon men like Dibdin tried the experiment of presenting musical pieces with dialogue. These were simply the "legitimate" burlettas taken over by the minors because, apart from their airs, the whole was in recitative and consequently, not spoken, but sung. Perhaps to their surprise no opposition was put in their way, and as a result still a further experiment was made. A regular play was taken, the dialogue put into blundering rimed couplets and a few songs added, the whole being presented as a "burletta." No doubt the very first attempts in this style were adaptations of comedies and farces, but continued success led to boldness, and serious plays were seized upon. When once this fashion had been established,

[1] This and the following passage are extracted from original letters bound up with the plays for 1824 in the L.C. Collection.

[2] See *supra*, p. 102. While I do not hold with all his conclusions, and while he omits altogether mention of the earlier "legitimate" burletta, I should call special attention to Professor E. B. Watson's excellent treatment of this question in his *From Sheridan to Robertson*, pp. 33–47.

clearly the dialogue came to assume an ever greater importance and the formal orchestra dwindled down to a single piano. "The tinkling of the piano and the jingle of the rhyme[1]," were, therefore, the chief characteristics of the burlettas of the first decades of the nineteenth century. By this time it had become an unwritten law that anything which could be called a burletta might be presented at a minor theatre. The next movement forward was, peculiarly enough, the result of an action on the part of the patent theatres. Colman once more comes to our aid. He observes that *Tom Thumb*, as altered and provided with songs, was produced at one of the two major theatres as a burletta, that is to say as a "legitimate" burletta. He continues:

> In this piece there is partly dialogue without music; and I have been recently informed from good authority, that it was inadvertently announced by the managers of Covent Garden theatre... as a burletta, and that they repent of having afforded this precedent.

Well might they repent, for the managers of the minor theatres were not slow to seize their opportunity. Now they could put on a play with a few songs, and, when challenged, point to the Covent Garden interpretation of the term. The tinkling of the piano became fainter and fainter, an occasional chord at long intervals providing merely an indication of its presence. The songs, of course, remained, and it seems that the Lord Chamberlain finally came to take the view that a three-act play—for five acts were always indicative of legitimacy—with not less than five songs could come within the burletta division. The minors were now free, to all intents and purposes, to play what they desired[2]. Even Shakespeare was swept into their net, although for the most part they found it safer and more profitable to confine their activities to melodrama, farce, extravaganza and burlesque.

In order to make quite clear the scope of this burletta

[1] *Theatrical Inquisitor*, Oct. 1812.

[2] Planché has a note in his *Extravaganzas* (ii. 23) explaining that by burlettas "we were desired to understand dramas containing not less than five pieces of vocal music in each act." From an examination of extant plays, it would seem that the words "in each act" are here a mistake.

tradition, it may not be unwise to glance at two typical repertories, that of the Surrey Theatre in 1810 and that of the Royalty in 1812. Shortly after opening for the spring season we find that the managers of the former present, as burlettas, both Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem* (May 21) and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (May 28), following up the production of these two plays with another of Mrs Centlivre's *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (Aug. 27). Nothing could have been more "legitimate" than these dramas, yet the burletta conception could allow of their free performance. Even more informative is the list of new productions at the Royalty in the summer of 1812. On Aug. 3 appeared a burletta version of Charles Shadwell's *The Fair Quaker*, accompanied by *The Enchantment or Trappolin's Vagaries*, evidently derived from Cockain's *Trapolin a supposed Prince*. *Tekeli; or, the Siege of Montgatz* (Aug. 10) is obviously a burletta rendering of Hook's melodrama (D.L. 1808), while a whole series of later performances filch freely from dramas written in the last years of the preceding century. *The Battle of Hexham; or, Days of Yore* (Aug. 17) must be Colman's *The Battle of Hexham; or, Days of Old*; *No Song, No Supper* (Aug. 10) and *My Grandmother* (Aug. 13) are taken from Prince Hoare; *The Stranger* (Sept. 7) is simply the famous Drury Lane success of 1798; *Fortune's Frolic* (Sept. 24) is a version of Allingham's play; while *The Follies of a Day; or, The Marriage of Figaro* (Oct. 1) clearly is naught else than Holcroft's adaptation of Beaumarchais' comedy. These burlettas prove that the minors could, without impunity, seize upon all the more modern plays which had proved popular in the major theatres. A fictional division into three acts and the addition of those few songs could make legitimate dramas the property of whichever minor manager cared to appropriate them. Before leaving the 1812 Royalty season, moreover, it is important to observe that the last three "new" burlettas produced during the year were *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Oct. 5), *King Lear and his Three Daughters* (Oct. 24) and *King Richard III; or, the Battle of Bosworth Field* (Dec. 26).

As is made plainly evident from the above summary account, we can with no certainty give the title burletta to any particular species of dramatic composition of the age. The word may be applied to any of the varied types produced in the minor theatres, although in general it signified most frequently the operatic farce which was so popular a form. Just as comedy bowed to the will of farce, the comic opera bowed to the farcical sketch interspersed with songs. A few more elaborate comic operas, it is true, attempt to retain the style of Bickerstaff and his eighteenth century companions, and such a man as William Dimond can present us with a genuine "confession of Operatic Faith[1]." The points made by this author deserve some attention. As to the plot of comic opera, he decides that

> it may be either serious or sprightly, or it may combine both qualities, *ad libitum*, with just a sufficient interest to excite attention and to banish *ennui* during the necessary spaces between song and song, but never so vividly to stimulate the feelings of an Audience, as to make the recurrence of Music be felt as an impertinent interruption. The *Incidents* are not required to be strictly probable; nevertheless they certainly ought to be *just possible*, and at no time to degenerate into the downright extravagances of fantastic Melodrame or of buffoon Farce. The *Dialogue* should be unambitiously colloquial, yet raised above positive meanness; it should unfold whatever fable there may be, intelligibly, and come to the point with as much conciseness as possible—Above all, the MUSICAL SITUATIONS ought to spring with spontaneity out of the very necessities of the Scene; never betraying themselves to be labored introductions for the mere purpose of exhibiting vocal talent, but always to appear so many integral portions and indispensable continuations of the Story.

These remarks are interesting, but few there were who thought on this subject so curiously.

Dimond was one of the most energetic purveyors of this operatic comedy during the age, generally flavouring his pieces with a highly sentimental tone. *The Sea-Side Story* (C.G. May 1801), *Youth, Love, and Folly* (D.L. May 1805) and *The Young Hussar, or Love and Money* (D.L. March

[1] Preface to *Native Land; or, The Return from Slavery* (C.G. Feb. 1824).

1807) are among his better works, although hardly any deserve space for individual analysis. There is one point, however, concerning others besides Dimond, which warrants particular comment. In *Native Land* we find a note:

TIME—From the Hour of Noon until a few Minutes beyond the Midnight,

while in *Youth, Love, and Folly* there is this:

TIME—From Noon till the beginning of the Evening.

At first sight, these might be considered isolated examples, elements traditionally retained by an individual dramatist from the Augustan system. Further investigation of the drama of the period, however, reveals the interesting fact that Dimond's notes are by no means so isolated. Not only does a dignified dramatist such as Talfourd refuse to overstep a two-day limit[1], but quite illegitimate playwrights joined in a crusade for the retention of the Unities. Brown's *Narensky* (D.L. Jan. 1814) and Siddons' *Time's a Tell Tale* (D.L. Oct. 1807) both boast of a fictional one-day duration, and such a writer as Thomas Dibdin can present a whole series of plays with as restricted a sphere[2]. While it forms a digression, this note on these neo-classic conventions may help to show how far the age was as yet from a sure dramatic purpose. In the midst of melodrama and vaudeville the Augustan standards still weakly hold their heads aloft.

There does not seem to be much gained by any formal differentiation between the farcical and comic types of opera during this period. In any event most of the so-called comic situations descend to farcical levels. Beside Dimond, Thomas Dibdin helped to keep the operatic form popular. His plays, like Dimond's, are for the most part sentimental; *The Two Gregories; or, Where did the Money came from?* (Surrey, April 1821) may be regarded as typical. Here the plot concerns an error in name. One Mr Gregory has saved the life of John Bull, and the latter, on learning the name of his bene-

[1] Cf. *The Athenian Captive* (H.[2] 1838).

[2] *The Cabinet* (C.G. 1802), *The English Fleet, in* 1342 (C.G. 1803), *Morning, Noon, and Night* (H.[2] 1822). *Of Age To-morrow* (D.L. 1800), has a time-limit equal to "that of the action."

factor, sends him a thousand pounds. The money, however, gets into the hands of a second Mr Gregory and there is considerable pother before the final discovery and highly sentimental retribution.

The majority of these pieces are exceedingly slight. Moncrieff's *The Parson's Nose! or The Birth Day Dinner* (Vic. Dec. 1835), derived from Desangier's *Le dîner de Madelon, ou le bourgeois du Marais*, is a thoroughly representative *jeu d'esprit*. Old Bubb is to have a dinner and his house-keeper Madeleine dearly wishes that no visitors should come. Parson Chittenden arrives, and Madeleine succeeds in driving him off by declaring that Bubb is mad and has a strange propensity for "the parson's nose." Since Bubb does really love this part of a fowl, the scenes go merrily forward "in equivoque." *How to take up a Bill, or the Village Vauxhall* (City, Nov. 1833) deals with a similar subject. The idea here is taken from *L'ami bontemps, ou la maison de mon oncle* by Theauton and Mélesville. Merrycliff is seriously in debt, and, to ease his fortunes and incidentally to enable him to marry, his friends, putting bills outside, arrange his uncle's house as a kind of Vauxhall. The old uncle, of course, is very puzzled and very irate, but all ends well and Merrycliff runs away with his Cecilia. "Gulling" provides also the theme of *Rochester; or, King Charles the Second's Merry Days* (Olym. Nov. 1818). This shows us Rochester and Buckingham, bored and seeking for intrigue, in a country inn. Two gay (but of course virtuous) ladies of quality come down and cheat them finely. How unhistorical the atmosphere is may be gauged from one remark of Rochester's in the third act:

> All powerful nature, how potent is thy sway? Silvia, you have conquered me.—The honour of woman should always be kept sacred, when entrusted to the honour of man.

That this admixture of sentimentality and risqué-ness was pleasing to the age is proved by a note to the 1825 edition which states that "all the fashion, and nearly all the population of London, were attracted 'by this drama' to a Theatre,

previously almost wholly unknown, and unattended. The two Royal Theatres, with the whole weight of their attractions, were for the time deserted." Nor was the risqué-ness confined to dramas set in the age of Charles II. Something of this tone appears in *Maid or Wife; or, The Deceiver Deceived* (D.L. Nov. 1821), a not unamusing operatic farce by Barham Livius. Most of the comic interest here depends on equivocal situation. Sir George Rakewell makes love to Fanny while her real husband, Ready, has to stand behind his chair in his capacity as waiter. Lady Rakewell comes home thinking that her husband is unwell and addresses him under this impression while he replies, wondering whether she has discovered his philandering propensities. The risqué situations are, however, as in the other plays, covered with a veil of sentimental reflection.

Sentimentalism, too, colours the operatic farces of Isaac Pocock and James Kenney. *Yes or No?* (H.[2] Aug. 1808) by the former shows Charles Fervor slandered by his hypocritical guardian, Obadiah Broadbrim. Naturally his honesty is discovered and he is reconciled to his uncle, Sir Barometer Oldstyle. The devices by which a Janus Jumble succeeds in marrying his Clara fill out the two acts of *Hit or Miss!* (Lyc. Feb. 1810) and those by which a Prince Royal gains the affections of a Princess of Navarre provide material for *John of Paris* (C.G. Nov. 1814)[1]. Kenney's *Turn Out!* (Lyc. March 1812) runs on a theme just as hackneyed. The story of Maria's pretended idiocy in order to escape the attentions of Dr Truckle is derived either from Arthur Murphy's *The Citizen* or from its original, *La Fausse Agnès* of Destouches. *Matrimony* (D.L. Nov. 1804) is certainly taken from *Adolphe et Clare* and veers sentimentally close to tears. Delaval and Clara have a lovers' quarrel. Their good-natured uncle pretends to despatch them to prison, and their differences are, of course, disposed of when separation threatens. *The Alcaid; or, Secrets of Office* (H.[2] Aug. 1824) is a foolish piece, interesting only when taken along with the numerous other Oriental-set operas of the time. Of this

[1] This play is taken from St Just's *Jean de Paris*.

species Dimond's *Abou Hassan* (D.L. April 1825), written on the theme of O'Keeffe's *The Dead Alive*, the anonymous *The Fall of Algiers* (D.L. Jan. 1825), with its blundering Timothy Tourist, and C. A. Somerset's "*Yes!*" (Surrey, 1829) may be taken as representative.

The favourite subjects were those such as appeared in some of the above-mentioned plays—"gullings," deceits, equivocal situations. James Cobb has quite an amusing piece called *A House to be Sold* (D.L. Nov. 1802), built on these lines[1]. Here we are presented to a pair of penniless gentlemen, Charles and Belfield. Wandering in the country they see a house to be sold and, after making an inspection, sign an agreement to buy it for £5000. A neighbouring Jew, alarmed at some rumours, offers them £8000, which, naturally, is accepted. Charles presents the whole of the £3000 to his friend Belfield that the latter may marry his Charlotte. Lovers' deceits occupy the attention of the author of *The Quadrille; or, A Quarrel, for What?* (E.O.H. June 1819), and these are varied in J. R. Planché's *The Loan of a Lover* (Olym. Sept. 1834). Here Gertrude, the orphan, loves Peter Spyk while Captain Amersfort loves Ernestine. Ernestine and Peter cannot bring themselves to a declaration of passion, so Gertrude and Amersfort plot together and pretend betrothal; this successfully brings the other pair to their senses. These deceits, of course, frequently provide quite fair stage situations, as in Planché's *Paris and London* (Adel. Jan. 1828). In this piece Viscount Volatil pursues the honest ballet-girl, Coraly. Lady Volatil dresses as William and succeeds in gaining him back. A sub-plot deals with the loves of Rose and the jealous little peruquier, Jean Jacques François Antigone Hypolite Frisac. A quarrel of husband and wife gives more than one amusing situation in Marie-Therese Kemble's *The Day after the Wedding; or, A Wife's First Lesson* (C.G. May 1808), while equally good episodes are provided by Mr O. P. Bustle, the strolling manager, in R. B. Peake's *Amateurs and Actors* (E.O.H. Aug. 1818).

[1] This is derived from *La maison à vendre.*

Other writers try an exaggerated fantastic style. J. B. Buckstone in *Nine too many* (Adel. March 1847) has a tale of a sailor, Jack Modest, who is condemned in Mexico to live with his nine wives. He escapes with one. James Kenney in *The Illustrious Stranger, or Married and Buried* (D.L. Oct. 1827) likewise has a sailor hero, one Bowbell[1]. This gentleman is wrecked on an island off Malabar and is in great glee when he is about to be married to the princess Irza. His joy turns to fear when he discovers that, in that country, a husband is buried with a dead wife, and he is only too glad to abandon his claims to Azan, the princess' lover. Another play of the same type is Shirley Brooks' *The Wigwam* (Lyc. Jan. 1847). Fondlesquaw, an Indian chief, is really Mr Lobscouse, who has fled from his wife in Bloomsbury. This lady eventually discovers him, to his discomfiture. The little opera is full of Rousseauesque sentiments in spite of its ludicrous and fantastic theme, Julia Lobscouse and her lover Pluffy Plumpton being sharply contrasted with the innocent Cora and the Indian braves.

In thus dealing with the operatic farce of the times we must not forget the work of Charles Dickens—not because Dickens' efforts are particularly fine, but because they have an interest beyond those of the Moncrieffs and the Kenneys[2]. Three of his plays in this style were performed at the St James's theatre in 1836 and 1837. *The Strange Gentleman* would have been a successful production had it not been spoiled by that common Dickensian failing—the over-employment of coincidence. The Strange Gentleman's fear of a duel is like Winkle's, and Tom Sparks, the one-eyed boots at the St James's Arms, is sworn brother to Sam Weller. Much poorer is *The Village Coquettes* (St James's, Dec. 1836), which has a duller and sentimental theme—the pursuing of Lucy by Squire Norton and the prickings of conscience that come eventually to his heart. *Is She his Wife? Or, Something Singular* (St James's, March 1837) returns to the

[1] This play obviously owes much to *La veuve de Malabar*.

[2] See A. Woolcot, *Mr. Dickens goes to the Play* (1922), and T. E. Pemberton, *Charles Dickens and the Stage* (1888).

world of misunderstandings. Lovetown flirts with Mrs Limbury and Mrs Lovetown with Tapkins—not because they love flirting but because they want to waken jealousy in each other. Through an error Limbury and Tapkins come to believe that Mrs Lovetown is not really Lovetown's wife, and there are considerable complications to solve at the close.

Perhaps Dickens' operatic farces, particularly *The Strange Gentleman*, have a truth to character and a literary finish denied to most of the others, but his endeavours in this kind cannot be accounted really outstanding achievements. The three plays easily fall in with the prevailing tendencies of the time, and, after a brief examination, they may be dismissed along with the whole of that teeming world of musical farce. The interest of the type is largely historical, and a few scenes of brilliance, even a few brilliant plays, cannot quite call for any general critical praise. The operatic farce of the early nineteenth century is an inheritance from the eighteenth century; it has had much to do with the forming of popular dramatic types of today; and for those two things, rather than for any great intrinsic worth, must we value it.

IV. *Burlesques and Extravaganzas*

Undoubtedly the age saw many of its own follies, and melodramatic burlesque flourished freely alongside of melodrama. It is to be questioned, however, whether that critical spirit which lies behind *The Rehearsal* and *The Critic* was chiefly responsible for the flourishing of the burlesque type in the nineteenth century. That criticism, implied if not directly stated, did enter in cannot be gainsaid, but there was something else which impelled men to applaud the burlesques which, as a glance at the play-list given to this volume will show, formed no mean part of the general repertoire of these years. That something else was the love of the fantastic, the impossibly exaggerated and the patently absurd. Most of these burlesques exist for their own ridiculous qualities, and

many, especially the "travesties," have little thought of follies inherent in the original play travestied. To turn a pair of doves in a would-be poetic simile into a boar and sow implies criticism; to make Romeo speak like a navvy and Cleopatra like a Cockney flower-girl manifests only the desire for the openly absurd. In general, therefore, the burlesques of the early nineteenth century are of less intrinsic interest than those of preceding decades and must, for the most part, be treated in the mass rather than individually.

Of those which imply direct or indirect criticism may be mentioned *The Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh, or The Rovers of Weimar* (H.[2] July 1811), described as a "Tragico-Comico-Anglo-Germanico-Hippodramatico Romance" and refashioned from Canning's earlier burlesque of the Kotzebuian school, *The Rovers*. Thomas Dibdin's *Melodrama Mad! or The Siege of Troy* (Surrey, May 1819) by its title promises well, but the rehearsal-scheme with which it starts is not sustained and the follies ridiculed are really not those of the melodrama at all. Slightly cleverer is the same author's *Bonifacio and Bridgetina; or, The Knight of the Hermitage, or The Windmill Turrett; or, The Spectre of the North-East Gallery* (C.G. March 1808), but nearly all its hits fail to find a mark. There is clever satire, it is true, in G. A. à Beckett's well-known *Scenes from the Rejected Comedies* (1844), but this is not truly theatrical. The scenes from *The Husband* by J[ame]s S[herida]n K[nowle]s, *The Humbugs of the Hour* by D[ougla]s J[errol]d, *The Templars* by Serjt. T[alfour]d, *Jane Jenkins; or The Ghost of the Back Drawing Room* by E. F[it]zb[al]l and *Credit* by Sir E. L. B. L. E. D. B[ulwe]r, Bart., have all some genuine *jeux d'esprit*.

There are, of course, innumerable topical pieces, such as *Another Maid and Another Magpie* (Olym. Nov. 1815) and *The Man and the Monkey* (Olym. Nov. 1815), both ridiculing the popular versions of *The Maid and the Magpie* (in 1815)[1] or *Black-eyed Sukey* (Olym. Dec. 1829) which makes absurdity of the well-known *Black-eyed Susan* (Surrey, 1829), but these

[1] See under Pocock and Arnold in the Hand-list of Plays.

have no real intrinsic value and are usually very vulgar artistically and very dull[1].

Of all the burlesques of this time that which has survived the longest is *Bombastes Furioso* (H.[2] Aug. 1810) by W. B. Rhodes, but it is quite evident that in this piece there is no satirical thought of contemporary (or other) serious drama. The absurdity exists for its own sake. We may laugh at the witty lines and the exaggerated rant, but it is not because we are able to compare these lines mentally with others from would-be dignified plays. The madness of Tilburina has a peculiar quality of its own because it recalls other stage madnesses; the roaring of Bombastes belongs to himself[2].

There is, however, still to be considered the field covered by the revue[3] and by the extravagant travestie. Already we have met with J. R. Planché's *Success; or, A Hit if you like it* (Adel. Dec. 1825) and an indication has been given of its contents. In turn the various candidates for Success are led before the royal throne, until finally comes the satirical portrait of Masurier who made a name for himself in *Jocko, or the Ape of Brazil* (1825). Success is charmed: to her father she admits that he has gained her heart. This style Planché continued in *The Drama's Levée; or, A Peep at the Past* (Olym. April 1838) which shows us The Drama (in a critical state of health), Legitimate Drama and Illegitimate Drama, "her sons, on the worst possible terms with each other," Praise, Censure and Folly, together with a whole series of Presentations, imitations of popular performers in all theatres from Drury Lane to Norton Folgate. The dialogue, with its neat rimes and constant puns, goes easily; here, for example, is the entry of the two brothers:

[1] In France also the spirit of the melodrama was laughed at in spite of its popularity. On the parodies and burlesques produced in Paris during the early nineteenth century see P. Ginisty, *Le Mélodrame* (Paris, 1910), pp. 184–90.

[2] On the Shakespeare travesties see *supra*, pp. 90–1, and *infra*, pp. 151–2.

[3] See *supra*, p. 135.

Enter LEGITIMATE DRAMA *in a Roman toga.*

L. DRA. He whom they own Legitimate is here.
DRA. You naughty boy! when I'm so very poorly;
You have been fighting with your brother surely.
L. DRA. I have; because of him I can't get fed,
Whilst he is almost sick with gingerbread.
DRA. Will you ne'er cease this ruinous debate?
Where's that audacious Illegitimate?

Enter ILLEGITIMATE DRAMA *in a dress half harlequin and half melo-dramatic.*

I. DRA. Behold! (*striking an attitude*).
DRA. Unnatural son!
I. DRA. Is't thus I'm styled?
I always thought I was your *natural* child.
L. DRA. He puns! He'll pick a pocket the next minute!
I. DRA. I shan't pick yours, because there's nothing in it!
L. DRA. That is because you robb'd me long ago!
I. DRA. Come, who began to rob, I'd like to know?
When I was quite a child in leading string,
Before I'd learnt to speak, or anything
But dance my dolls to music, didn't you
Begin to vow they were your playthings too?
Stole from the nursery of my best hopes,
My rocking horses and my skipping-ropes,
And took my harlequins from loss to save you,
And now you blame the *punches* that I gave you.

Duet—LEGITIMATE DRAMA *and* ILLEGITIMATE DRAMA—"*You Minicking Miss*"—"*Midas.*"

L. DRA. You mimicking fool, do you hope with the town
Your trumpery shows will go longer down?
I. DRA. D'ye think they ever would come you to see,
If it wasn't for show that you take from me?
L. DRA. Tawdry elf!
I. DRA. Go look to yourself!
You've laid till you're mouldy on the shelf.
L. DRA. You lay out in gingerbread all your pelf.
(*they attack each other*—THEATRES *take different sides*)
DRA. Hence both and each who either cause espouses!
You'll drive me mad! a plague on *all* your houses!
(*drives them all out*)
Unless between themselves they soon agree,

Those boys, I feel, will be the death of me!
They so confound me that though I'm their mother,
I vow I sometimes can't tell one from t'other.
I'm half distracted with the horrid din!

The Drama at Home; or, An Evening with Puff (H.[2] April 1844) continues in the same style. Written lightly, yet in a state of profound pessimism in regard to the future of drama, it is particularly interesting as showing the impression made by the passing of the Theatres Act of 1843. These revues of Planché's are among the most delightful things the early nineteenth century theatre produced. Trivial they may be, but they have a grace and a lightness of touch which makes us esteem more highly this prolific Somerset Herald.

Among the extravagant travesties perhaps *The Enchanted Isle; or, "Raising the Wind" on the most approved Principles* (Adel. Nov. 1848) by the Brothers Brough is the best-known. Scene ii shows the

Deck of the "Naples Direct" Steam-boat, Funnel in C., *Paddle-boxes* R. & L., *with practicable gallery from one to the other.*

Here are Alonso and Ferdinand and Gonzalo, who become mightily seedy with the tossing of the waves. The scenes unfold themselves in Shakespearian order but with constantly topical dialogue. Even Caliban is affected:

Pro. Well, sir, why don't you work?
Cal. (*giving the boot a single rub*). Ay, there's the rub.
Pro. What! mutinous! out, vile, rebellious cub!
Cal. (*with sudden vigour*). Oh! who's afraid? Blow you and your boots together. [*Throws boot down.*
My soul's above your paltry upper leather.
Pro. (*aside*). That's democratic, and by no means moral!
(*To Caliban*) Pick up that boot, unless you'd pick a quarrel.
You'd best not raise a breeze.
Cal. Oh! blow your breezes,
The love of liberty upon me seizes;
My bosom's filled with freedom's pure emotions,
And on the "Rights of Labour" I've strong notions.
Pro. You won't work, then?
Cal. No—up for my rights I'll stick;
I've long enough been driven—now I'll kick.

SONG.

TUNE—"*When the Heart of a Man.*"

When the back of a donkey's oppress'd with wares,
Which weigh rather more than his strength well bears,
Instead of submitting he stoutly—stoutly
Plucks up a spirit and shows some airs.
Stripes are administer'd—kicks also,
But his stout ribs no emotion show.
Press him,
Caress him,
Try kicking
Or licking,
The more he is wollop'd the more he won't go.

Such travesties proved popular and over half a score of Shakespeare's works were similarly treated[1]. It is not a far cry from these to the extravaganzas proper, where mythological or fairy stories were told in topical style. Here once more Planché is supreme. Starting with *Amoroso, King of Little Britain* (D.L. April 1818) he provided for Madame Vestris and others a long series of wildly fantastic burlesque pieces, some on classical legend, some on the stories of Perrault. *Olympic Revels; or, Prometheus and Pandora* (Olym. Jan. 1831) was his first real success, and this led, immediately, to *Olympic Devils; or, Orpheus and Eurydice* (Olym. Dec. 1831), and, generally, to his life-long dramatic career. Classical subjects occupied his attention for a few years and then in December 1836 at the Olympic came *Riquet with the Tuft*, derived from the French Féerie Folie *Riquet à la Houppe*. This was immediately successful and was followed by *Puss in Boots* (Olym. Dec. 1837) and many another. Sufficient has been already quoted to give an idea of Planché's style. Puns appear in every second line; colloquialisms intrude into the formally rimed verse spoken by famous characters; well-known stories are treated in familiar manner; topical allusions abound; and the whole is evidently planned for the richest possible settings. Others followed in the same path. The Brothers Brough produced their still-remembered *Camaralzaman and Badoura; or, The Peri who loved a Prince* (H.[2] Dec.

[1] See *supra*, pp. 90–1.

1848), which contains some rather amusing scenes. In the third part we are shown the Gardens of the Imperial Palace in China; the Emperor enters with his guards and mandarins:

Man. Long live the Emperor!
Emp. Silence, villains! stow it!
We'll not live long, unless we like—you know it.
'Tis not for your plebeian throats to give
Orders to *us* how long you'd have us live.
[*They all prostrate themselves before him.*
Sons of burnt fathers! what means that position?
How dare you tumble down without permission?
[*They rise abruptly, and stand bolt upright, in a line.*
Now, by my pigtail! by my father's nails!
By the imperial dragon's sacred scales!
My mind's so tossed about, so hurried, flurried,
Bothered, perplexed, annoyed, insulted, worried,
That soon I feel, with passion and disgust,
Within my *bosom* there will be a *bust*—
One universal smash my senses scatter—
[*Mildly to audience.*
Yet, stay, I'd best first tell you what's the matter.

These extravaganzas and burlesques were among the most popular of dramatic types in the thirties and forties of the century. In some ways they aided in developing something new in the theatre; in others they helped to retard the development of more serious drama. In any case, with pantomime they clearly were attractive forces. Much they took from older writers, but they had the merit of altering what they stole. Free merriment, familiar themes new treated, gorgeous settings, these they gave freely to the people of the time. If we substitute "Extravaganza" for "Pantomime" in the quotation, Thomas Dibdin's satirical remark in *Harlequin Hoax; or, A Pantomime Proposed* (Lyc. Aug. 1814) might be regarded as strictly apposite:

Manager. Pardon me, Sir, but it is *our* place to remember there have been such authors as *Gay*, *Steele*, *Congreve*,...

Patch. The best names living for Pantomime, let your beginning be *Gay*, for the middle you may, perhaps, be obliged to *Steal*, and the fire of CONGREVE will make your last scene go off like a SKY-ROCKET.

The remarks are true, however, for the pantomime itself. It was during this period that there grew up the regular tradition of the Christmas pantomime, so that by 1830 we find all the theatres in London vying with one another on Dec. 26 with their fare of the Harlequinade. Up to 1850 Harlequin —now alas! all but banished—dominated the pantomime. Usually he was attached to some sort of nursery tale, as in *Harlequin and Cinderella* or *Harlequin and Jack the Giant Killer*, but the themes of the early nineteenth century pantomime were legion. Old plays appear here, as in *Harlequin and Friar Bacon*; so too does classic legend, as in *Harlequin Bacchus*, and ancient English history, as in *Harlequin and Good Queen Bess*, and ancient English legend, as in *Harlequin and King Lud of Ludgate*, and pure extravagance, as in *Harlequin and Poonoowingkeewangflibeedeeflobeedeebuskeebang, King of the Cannibal Islands*. It is impossible, of course, to deal with the pantomime in a survey of this kind, for the history of the early nineteenth century pantomime is a history of personalities and not of dramatic achievement. At the same time, the popularity of this form of theatrical art must always be remembered as we trace the course of the other types of drama in the age. The spectacular display, the bold merriment, the constant action of the pantomime made an ever constant and ever dominating appeal to audiences not only in Sadler's Wells but in Covent Garden and Drury Lane as well.[1]

[1] In connection with Planché's extravaganzas may be noted an interesting paper, *Some Burlesques with a Purpose*, 1830–70 (*Philological Quarterly*, viii, 3, July, 1929) by Dougald MacMillan, which discusses the serious aim underlying these "revues."

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGITIMATE DRAMA

I. *Tragedies and Dramas*

"He whom they own Legitimate is here," says Legitimate Drama on his entry to the stage in Planché's *The Drama's Levée*[1], and the self-conscious, self-assured tones are characteristic. The trouble with the legitimate drama was not that it was legitimate but that it was too conscious and proud of its legitimacy. It resembled some scions of our present-day aristocracy in that it trusted too much to its ancestry, and thought too little of individual worth and of individual effort; it resembled these, too, in forgetting that that from which it had sprung often had in origin the bar sinister. For Philip Sidney Shakespeare would have been as illegitimate as Pocock was for Talfourd or Sheil.

On the other hand, one must judge these men according to their lights and must endeavour to do justice to their attempts, misguided though many of them might be, to restore the ancient glories of the English stage. That their efforts were sincere enough, no one can deny; but sincerity does not necessarily imply artistry or even a right way of thinking. It is their own dramatic achievements and not the strength of their convictions which must be that by which they are judged.

As has been suggested above, it is virtually impossible to separate entirely the unacted from the acted drama, for most of those who penned the unacted plays originally intended them for the stage. On the other hand, the distinction is there for all, and many poets deliberately eschewed the theatre and professed openly that their works were for the closet alone. Within the limits of this chapter, therefore, I have included only those writers whose plays, or some of whose plays, were actually given performance, although

[1] See *supra*, p. 150.

I fully recognise that the harsh separation of Coleridge and Wordsworth, simply because *Remorse* happened to be acted, is not justifiable on all counts.

Something has been said in my last volume[1], both concerning the "poetic play" in general and concerning the work of one of the most interesting of the early reformers, Joanna Baillie. Not only was this Scots author first on the field, but her tireless energy drove her to produce a body of dramatic literature far exceeding the scope of that provided by any of her companions. In 1798 her first series of *Plays on the Passions* was published; a second appeared in 1802, a third in 1812; while in addition there were the *Miscellaneous Plays* of 1804 and the *Dramas* of 1836. Of her 26 dramas five were publicly performed[2]. To be perfectly just to her efforts, Joanna Baillie's critical pronouncements must, at one and the same time, be read along with and carefully separated from, her dramas themselves. It is well known how, in the *Plays on the Passions*, she endeavoured to pen comedies and tragedies on set emotions—hate, fear, jealousy, and what not, although we must admit that often her practice, particularly in her later plays, belies her own initial and theoretical purpose. Some of the *Dramas* of 1836 at least introduce a complexity of passion which is far removed from the mono-emotional note aimed at in the plays included in her first series. Taking that initial purpose at its face value, however, we find that it serves to mark at once a potentiality for dramatic advance and an unquestionably vitiated tendency. That which marred much of the early nineteenth century poetic drama was the tendency towards the abstract. A Romantic poet only too often started from a theory, attempting to discover and devise a plot which should illustrate his mental abstract, in this providing a sufficient contrast to the methods of the Elizabethan dramatists whose prime interest was in the human personality and in the story, thought of in

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 224–6.

[2] See M. S. Carhart, *The Life and Work of Joanna Baillie* (Yale Studies, 1923). Her connection with Scott has, of course, led to the incidental treatment of her work in most histories of romanticism.

the first place as a stirring or amusing theme. On the other hand, great drama always exhibits a central atmosphere, or dominant passion, which gives an informing purpose to the human events narrated in the course of the five acts; and it is this dominant passion which was so lamentably lacking in the dramas produced in England between the time of Otway and that of the Romantic poets. In thus stressing the necessity for the central emotion, therefore, Joanna Baillie was doing something which was of the utmost importance. The very calling attention to this fact marks out her plays as landmarks in the history of the English theatre.

As regards her positive achievement, of course, one may have considerable doubts. Her constructive power, while in the main adequate, is apt to suffer from sudden lapses. Her characters are only too often "romantically" conceived, and her dialogue has far too many echoes of Elizabethan, particularly Shakespearian, language. In atmosphere she recalls now Otway, now Shakespeare, now Kotzebue, now Schiller, almost always losing what might have been tragic effect in an outpouring of sentimentalism. These weaknesses are seen in her plays from first to last, no less indeed in the late *Romiero* than in the early *Basil*. It would be impossible here to analyse each one of the long series in detail, but a glance at several typical tragedies may serve as representative treatment. *De Monfort* (published 1798, acted D.L. April 1800), both because it was selected for stage performance, and because of its intrinsic merits, is the most important play of her earliest collection. There are faults in plenty as regards the construction; there is the inherent weakness in the presentation of the one passion; yet we feel here that there is at least the potentiality for dramatic power. Reading *De Monfort* our hopes rise for a resuscitation of true drama, for technique may, to a certain extent, be learned in the theatre and subtler characterisation may come with deeper knowledge of life. As always, however, these hopes are dashed to pieces on the rock of language[1]. Joanna Baillie

[1] For supplementary quotations see *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 224–5.

cannot forget the Elizabethans, and ever we are in the presence of a dialogue which is false because imitative and out of harmony with the age. Sometimes the imitation may give us passages of individual beauty. More often it leads to frigid and pathetic diction. Says a Lady to a Page in *De Monfort*[1],

> Is she young or old?
> *Page.* Neither, if right I guess, but she is fair;
> For time hath laid his hand so gently on her,
> As he too had been aw'd.
> *Lady.* The foolish stripling!
> She has bewitch'd thee. Is she large in stature?
> *Page.* So stately and so graceful is her form,
> I thought at first her stature was gigantick,
> But on a near approach I found, in truth,
> She scarcely does surpass the middle size.

What can we hope from this?

From the second volume we may select the first part of *Ethwald* for brief analysis. This play, written on the theme of ambition, shows the same weaknesses, together with an even more imitative tendency so far as the situations are concerned. *Macbeth* is a general model, but *Richard III* lies behind Ethwald's wooing of Elburga, and *King John* is not forgotten. Such palpable reminiscences, however, do not completely rob of value this tale of youthful innocence turned to terrible criminality by the one passion. Again, it is the language which gives the final blow to our wishes. Descriptive "poetic" passages are dragged in needlessly, giving, as in Ethelbert's speech in the first act, a tone unconsciously comic:

> When slowly from the plains and nether woods,
> With all their winding streams and hamlets brown,
> Updrawn, the morning vapour lifts its veil,
> And thro' its fleecy folds, with soften'd rays,
> Like a still'd infant smiling in his tears,
> Looks thro' the early sun:—when from afar
> The gleaming lake betrays its wide expanse,
> And, lightly curling on the dewy air,

[1] II. i.

The cottage smoke doth wind its path to heaven:
When larks sing shrill, and village cocks do crow,
And lows the heifer loosen'd from her stall:
When heaven's soft breath plays on the woodman's brow,
And ev'ry hair-bell and wild tangled flower
Smells sweetly from its cage of checker'd dew:
Ay, and when huntsmen wind the merry horn,
And from its covert starts the fearful prey;
Who, warm'd with youth's blood in his swelling veins,
Would, like a lifeless clod, outstretched lie,
Shut up from all the fair creation offers?
(ETHWALD *yawns and heeds him not.*) He heeds me not.

But who would, in a theatre? This love of tangled flowers agitating the breast of an Anglo-Saxon thane has no truth, no reality, no passion; it is an interlude, false and impertinent.

In the collection of 1804 the historical drama of *Constantine Paleologus* stands out boldly, and here, perhaps as clearly as in any of her later tragedies, we feel the potentialities of Joanna Baillie's art. Impossible speeches there are, but the conception of the emperor, with his strange mingling of heroism and effeminacy, is one which shows how her power of characterisation was developing as year passed year. For one thing in especial *Constantine Paleologus* deserves attention. In this play the authoress has most deliberately attempted to make use of that spectacular element which was so closely bound up with stage success. This spectacular element led to its successful performance, in an altered form, as *Constantine and Valeria* at the Surrey; and this too contributed to its popularity when produced at Liverpool in 1808 as *The Band of Patriots*. The endeavour shows that Joanna Baillie possessed more of the theatre sense, and of the will to the theatre, than the majority of her poetic companions.

In 1810 at Edinburgh appeared *The Family Legend*. Sponsored by Sir Walter Scott (who wrote the prologue) and with Mrs Siddons in the cast, it won a certain success. Unfortunately for its worth as a play, this drama falls into two sharply marked portions. The first, which shows Helen Campbell, now the wife of the Maclean, surrounded on all sides by hatred and suspicion, is well worked out, with less

of that false verbiage so common in her other serious plays. From the end of the second act, however, we suddenly plunge into artificial melodrama. Helen is marooned on a lonely rock which is submerged at high tide. The water creeps higher and higher and she is rescued just as her last despairing cries are about to be stifled by the rising waves. This perhaps we could suffer, but there is a double rescue. Helen's child has remained in the custody of the Macleans; the following scene will explain itself.

Lochtavish. Be not so hasty, Lorne—Think'st thou indeed
Ye have us here within your grasp, and nought
Of hostage or security retain'd
For our protection?
Lorne. What dost thou mean?
Loch. Deal with us as ye will:
But if within a week, return'd to Mull,
In safety I appear not, with his blood,
The helpless heir, thy sister's infant son,
Who in my mother's house our pledge is kept,
Must pay the forfeit.
Helen (*starting up from the body in an agony of alarm*). O horrible! ye will not murder him?
Murder a harmless infant!
Loch. My aged mother, lady, loves her son
As thou dost thine; and she has sworn to do it.
Hel. Has sworn to do it! Oh! her ruthless nature
Too well I know. (*To* LORNE *eagerly*) Loose them, and let them go.
Lorne. Let fiends like these escape?
Argyll (*to Helen*). He does but threaten
To move our fears: they dare not slay the child.
Hel. They dare! they will!—O if thou art my father!
If Nature's hand e'er twined me to thy heart
As this poor child to mine, have pity on me!
Loose them and let them go!—Nay, do it quickly.
O what is vengeance! Spare my infant's life.
Unpitying Lorne!—art thou a brother too?
The hapless father's blood is on thy sword,
And wilt thou slay the child! O spare him! spare him!
(*Kneeling to* ARGYLL *and* LORNE, *who stand irresolute, when enter* SIR HUBERT DE GREY, *carrying something in his arms, wrapped up in a mantle, and followed by*

MORTON. *On seeing* SIR HUBERT, *she springs from the ground, and rushes forward to him.*)

Ha! art thou here? in blessed hour return'd
To join thy prayers with mine,—to move their hearts—
Their flinty hearts;—to bid them spare my child!

De Grey (*lifting up the mantle, and shewing a sleeping Child*). The prayer is heard already: look thou here
Beneath this mantle where he soundly sleeps.

(HELEN *utters a cry of joy, and holds out her arms for the Child, but at the same time sinks to the ground, embracing the knees of* SIR HUBERT. ARGYLL *and* LORNE *run up to him, and all their Vassals, &c. crowding round, close them about on every side, while a general murmur of exultation is heard through the whole.* LOCHTAVISH *and* GLENFADDEN, *remaining on the side of the Stage with those who guard them, are struck with astonishment and consternation.*)

Their astonishment, however, cannot equal ours.

Unquestionably, Joanna Baillie's art developed with maturity, and, in spite of weaknesses and foolish situations similar to that in *The Family Legend*, her later plays have a psychological strength which strongly testifies to her talent. In *Orra*, we certainly have the unnatural and "poetic" language, but there is given us something in recompense. "Nay, Orra," says Eleonora,

Nay, Orra; these wild fits of uncurb'd laughter,
Athwart the gloomy tenor of your mind,
As it has low'r'd of late, so keenly cast,
Unsuited seem and strange.

To which Orra answers:

O nothing strange, my gentle Eleonora!
Did'st thou ne'er see the swallow's veering breast,
Wing the air beneath some murky cloud
In the sunn'd glimpses of a stormy day,
Shiver in silv'ry brightness?
Or boatman's oar, as vivid lightning flash
In the faint gleam, that like a spirit's path
Tracks the still waters of some sullen lake?
Or lonely Tower, from its brown mass of woods,
Give to the parting of a wintry sun
One hasty glance in mockery of the night
Closing in darkness round it?

Yet, beyond this useless verbiage, there is a strength in *Orra* which is, as it were, a premonition of greater dramatic power to come. The terrors of her mind are well portrayed and the presentation of the supposed supernatural visitor is dealt with in what might almost be styled a modern manner. Less interesting is *The Dream*, although there is an outward attempt here to escape towards a prose medium. The hand of Elizabethanism, unfortunately, lay heavy on prose and verse alike, so that Jerome and Benedict can have this frigid conversation:

> *Jer.* Be satisfied! be satisfied! It is not always fitting that the mind should lay open the things it is busy withal, though an articulate sound may sometimes escape it to set curiosity on the rack. Where is brother Paul? Is he still at his devotions?
>
> *Ben.* I believe so. But look where the poor Peasants are waiting without: it is the hour when they expect our benefactions. Go, and speak to them: thou hast always been their favourite confessor, and they want consolation.

There is not much to be hoped for from a style such as this, yet, strangely enough, the spirit of Maeterlinck, moaning to be born, lingers in these long-forgotten pages.

There is little in Joanna Baillie's last collection, published in 1836, that presents to us anything new, although in *Romiero* and *Henriquez* (D.L. March 1836), and, to a less extent, in the prose-tragedy of *The Stripling*, she shows an increased appreciation of dramatic technique. Those plays which we have already considered may be taken as representative of her whole career, a career which, in its turn, may be taken as symbolic of literary dramatic authorship during the period. With talent and a knowledge of the stage, Joanna Baillie has failed, and the reason of that failure is easily traced to the dead hand of Elizabethanism which lies heavy on her scenes. With an originality which makes her anticipate now Ibsen and now Maeterlinck, she has been crushed by that devastating idolisation of seventeenth century dramatic effort. There was the possibility that she might have been one of our foremost dramatists, but, as her works stand, we can only account her an interesting historical figure whose works are now to be

read rather for the light they throw on contemporary conditions than for any great inherent merit.

Among those who, like Joanna Baillie, stood with one foot in the eighteenth and one foot in the nineteenth century may be mentioned Lewis, Delap and Tobin, each of interest in his own way. The earlier works of Matthew Gregory, or "Monk," Lewis have been already dealt with[1], but the dramatic career of this lover of diablerie extended on to the end of the first decade of the period at present under discussion. As might be expected, Lewis' style tends towards the melodramatic, and he may be regarded as typical of a group of intelligent writers who, retaining just a touch of literary quality, wrote with the popular success of the theatre authors in their minds. In *Alfonso, King of Castile* (C.G. Jan. 1802) we get a blood-red drama of revenge, confessedly unhistorical, although "The Action is supposed to pass in the year 1345." Alfonso, the king, has, in past years, unjustly condemned Orsino, and the latter's son, Cæsario, thirsts for vengeance. Leagued with Melchior, he plans to assassinate the monarch. Complications, however, enter in from the facts that he is secretly married to Alfonso's daughter, Amelrosa, and that Orsino unexpectedly returns to aid his king. Cæsario is stabbed by his own father and Amelrosa runs decorously mad. The theme of outlawry, made so popular by *Die Räuber*, is repeated in *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* (D.L. May 1801), a "Romantic Drama" or tragi-comedy, with musical accompaniments, including a touching ditty:

The clock had toll'd "One!" all was silent and dread!

Here Adelmorn is the exile, banished for a crime of which he was, of course, entirely innocent. He is captured and about to be executed when Lodowick, the faithful friend, worms out the fatal secret of Count Ulric and all is well. We are grateful to the author for a footnote which appears in act v:

I must again request the reader to observe, that wherever Lodowick's speeches appear ludicrous, he is never supposed to intend them to produce that effect.

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, pp. 99–100.

Lewis, however, belongs more to the popular than to the literary school, and one cannot pretend—he never pretended—that he endeavoured to do aught else than give the public what it wanted. John Tobin is of far different calibre. Gifted with a sense for poetry and steeped in Elizabethan literature, he attempted to provide for the stage replicas of the dramas he most admired. That all his plays were produced posthumously is, in one way, a capital charge against the theatrical tastes and management of his times, yet that charge cannot be pushed too far. If it be taken to mean that the theatrical world was callous towards young dramatists, then it is true; but one cannot accept Tobin's works as of a truly creative kind. The imitative element mars whatever claims they might otherwise put forward. Four plays in all he has left to us, *The Honey Moon* (D.L. Jan. 1805), *The Curfew* (D.L. Feb. 1807), *The School for Authors* (C.G. Dec. 1808) and *The Faro Table, or The Guardians* (D.L. Nov. 1816). Although some of these are comedies, they may all be treated together in this section because of the poetic quality they share in common. All Tobin's dramas can be read with pleasure, yet of all can be said what was written in the prologue for his first play:

> Not new the subject of his first-born rhyme;
> But one adorn'd by bards of elder time.

For *The Honey Moon* he has gone primarily to *The Taming of the Shrew*, but he has not forgotten *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry IV*[1]. The play is interesting, and we watch the gradual subjection of Juliana with sympathy, but we can never forget the three facts, that the theme is outworn, that it has no connection with the life of the age, and that the language, beautiful though it may be, is merely a dim echo of Elizabethan diction. In *The Curfew* Tobin clearly tried to win applause by appealing to some of the dominant theatrical tendencies of the time. The scene is one of Norman days; "Gaunt Superstition" is appealed to; the prologue notes the patriotic

[1] See an unpublished thesis in the University of London by U. C. Nagchaudhuri entitled *Poetic Drama of the Nineteenth Century*.

element; there are robbers in the cast. The story is thoroughly melodramatic, with its gloomy castle-halls and its no less gloomy caves, with its hovel of high-born poverty, its strange recognitions, its final defeat of villainy and triumph of virtue. In thus abandoning himself to all the paraphernalia of the contemporary theatre, Tobin showed, clearly enough, what little stock of originality or of imagination the poetic dramatists of the time possessed.

If Lewis represents the complete submission of the literary playwright to the melodramatic tendencies so prevalent in the contemporary theatre, and if Tobin shows the wholehearted acceptance of Elizabethan standards with the occasional acceptance of elements borrowed from Kotzebue and Schiller, Dr John Delap may be taken as typical of another mood, that which would lead towards a resuscitation of classicism. In reality, of course, Delap, who knew Dr Johnson, is an eighteenth century author strayed into the world of romance, and his earlier efforts have been included in the previous volume of this history[1]. The year 1803, however, saw the appearance of four tragedies from his pen, and, in reading them, we must remember that classicism of a sort, as is exemplified even in the career of Byron, was at least one ingredient in romantic art. To the more broadly appealing tendencies of his time Delap bows by giving to *Gunilda* and *Matilda* early British settings, and by carrying that of *Abdalla* to the East, but his whole mind is set on classical standards; the Athenians and Addison are his two great models. There is, in reality, nothing in Delap's work which should call for a treatment of his plays in particular. Dulness casts a gloomy mantle over all, and, save as a prime example of that Augustanism which continued to cling to the nineteenth century stage, he may be passed by and forgotten. Delap's importance, paradoxically enough, comes, not from his own work, but from the work of others. He is an extreme representative of a school which, many years later, still held the liberal-minded Talfourd in its clutches.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 80. Although unacted, Delap's plays are dealt with here because they represent better than others a certain tendency of the age.

With reminiscences of Shakespeare, with Schillerian or Kotzebuian features, with Addisonian blank-verse, legitimate drama continued during the half-century its somewhat dismal career. Attempt after attempt was made to hold the stage; successively a Maturin, a Milman, a Byron, a Knowles, a Talfourd, a Browning was acclaimed as a master-dramatist, and successively the tones of each playwright's voice grew fainter and fainter.

Sheil, Maturin and Milman were the favourites of the literary critics of the earlier decades; but when have their works been played? Who now remembers their names save faintly as echoes in some account of nineteenth century literature? What true merit is to be discovered in their dramas? The dramatic career of Richard Lalor Sheil commenced in 1814 with the production of *Adelaide, or The Emigrants* (Crow-street, Dublin, Feb. 1814; C.G. 1816) in the capital of his native land, Dublin. In spite of a few good situations, *Adelaide* must be accounted but a sorry production. Full of dismal sentimentalism which pretends to be tragic, it drags its weary length along amidst an atmosphere of tears, artificial emotions and vague, meaningless philosophisings upon honour and liberty. Kotzebue and Fletcher seem to struggle over its silly corpse. In the same strain, with the added influence of Byron, Sheil continued his theatrical career. Sometimes, as in *The Apostate* (C.G. May 1817), he succeeded in devising situations of a certain force, but his mind is too full of sentimentality and his taste lies too much in the direction of horrors for any real good to come of his writing. It is characteristic of his talent that, for the theme of *Evadne* (C.G. Feb. 1819), he passed back to Shirley's somewhat lurid drama, *The Traitor*, and that the gloomy scenes of Massinger and Field's *The Fatal Dowry* were adapted by him for the stage. It may be confessed that Sheil has in him something of dramatic power, that, in reading his works, even a modern student feels there the potentiality of something greater than he actually achieved; but, after all, it is actuality and realisation, not potentiality, which we have to deal with here.

The same, or a similar, general criticism may be made of the work of Maturin and Milman. The former, Charles Robert Maturin[1], hailed, like Sheil, from Ireland, and, again like Sheil, his mind was filled with images and ideas culled from Byron, Fletcher and Kotzebue. In *Bertram; or, The Castle of St Aldobrand* (D.L. May 1816), his first and his most famous play, the hero is a count who, after the machinations of his enemy, becomes a corsair, returns to find his love, Imogine, the wife of his greatest foe, woos her into infidelity to her husband, kills this wretched man and finally dies by his own hand. There is a certain power in many of the scenes, but the love of horror, the distracted frenzy of the plot, the pathos unduly insisted upon, take from the merit of the play. The horror, the frenzy, and the pathos appear in even more terrible forms in Maturin's later plays, *Manuel* (D.L. March 1817) and *Fredolfo* (C.G. May 1819). If Sheil and Maturin show the romantic tendency towards sensationalism, Henry Hart Milman displays the tendency towards Fletcherian fantastic "tragedy." Milman's work was not so definitely theatrical as that of his two companions. Not only was he more noted in another sphere of literary endeavour, but only one of his plays was written deliberately for the stage[2]. This was *Fazio* (Surrey, Dec. 1816), originally performed at the Surrey as *The Italian Wife*, a drama which tells of the seizure of the dead Bartolo's gold by the hero Fazio, of his betrayal by his jealous wife, Bianca, and of her final repentance. The great merit of the play is the opportunity it gives for robust and full-blooded acting. Fazio is a good "part" and there is ample opportunity for the display of talent in both Bianca and Aldabella. Possibly this quality gave it its contemporary popularity.

From this group of dramatists one passes easily to Byron, Byron who, one of the committee of management at Drury Lane, man of the world and theatre-lover, might have been expected to do so much for the fortunes of the English

[1] See N. Idman, *Charles Robert Maturin: His Life and Works* (1923).

[2] *The Fall of Jerusalem* (1820), *The Martyr of Antioch* and *Belshazzar* (1822), and *Anne Boleyn* (1826) were dramatic poems rather than plays.

drama[1]. It is in his work that we can see most clearly at once the power of the age and the qualities which prevented the appearance of true dramatic success. Byron has a lordly power over the emotions; he has a style calculated to provide excellent dialogue; and he has, what many of his companion poets lacked, a flair for the theatre. Yet Byron's dramas, even if we make all allowances for them, even if we agree that their value is to a certain extent underrated, just fail to reach true greatness. This failure seems to be due to three major causes. In the first place, there is Byron's preoccupation with Byron. All the romantic poets were individualists, one might almost say egoists. Rarely could they pass beyond themselves to see the world and men objectively. As a result, their heroes are themselves, and the figures set alongside those heroes are either mistily outlined or else coloured by the reflected light of the author's personality. To be great, drama demands objective treatment, and the whole structure of the stage seems to come clattering down amidst the selfish tones of these Manfreds and their peers. Secondly, there is the familiar disdain of the contemporary theatre. Byron's letters show clearly that, in spite of his association with the playhouse, he looked upon it from the height of his overweening personality and the dignified seclusion of the House of Lords. The stage for him was little more than a toy. It amused him to be directing this thing, but he had no real aspirations for its immediate improvement. And, lastly, there is the preoccupation with themes ill-calculated to express the spirit of the age. Like the others, Lord Byron looks back instead of forward. His models are Kotzebue and Schiller and Otway and the Elizabethans; his themes are the themes of past times; of conscious endeavour on his part to devise something which will grip and interpret the temper of his time there is abso-

[1] On Byron's career as a playwright see particularly S. C. Chew's essay, *The Relations of Lord Byron to the Drama of the Romantic Period* (1914), and Sir Squire Bancroft and William Archer, *Byron on the Stage* (in *Byron the Poet*, edited by W. A. Briscoe, 1924). The *Letters*, as is well known, contain many important references both to Byron's own works and to the dramatic and theatrical affairs of his time.

lutely nothing. Because of his egoism there is a sameness in his dramas; because of his disdain an untheatrical quality in many; because of his retrospective mind a lack of strength and vitality. *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (1821) we may leave aside as purely dramatic poems, indicating in their form that one great weakness of the age. The others have to be compared, not with plays to come, but with plays of the past. Thus *Marino Faliero* (1821) recalls at once the *Venice Preserv'd* of Otway; if not an imitation, it is at least in the same style, and, powerful as some of its scenes undoubtedly are, it is seen to want power simply because of this fact. We may assure ourselves if we desire that the plot mirrors the main facts of the Cato Street Conspiracy; but, whether this is true or not, the framework is old and the texture faded. In *Sardanapalus* (1821) Byron turns to earlier days, and tells the story of the weak, yet strong, king whose fall brought the ruin of an empire. The structure of the play is excellent, and we are led deliberately on to the final pyre-scene when Sardanapalus and his Myrrha perish gloriously; yet there is something lacking in the drama as a whole. Perhaps our main dissatisfaction arises from the pathetic sentimentalism which breathes over the drama. We do not wonder at the hero; we simply pity him, and the end seems rather a thing for tears than for admiration. Beyond this, there is the sense that we are listening here to matters untrue. When a Shakespeare told of Antony and Cleopatra, he might make his heroine play billiards and show an acquaintanceship with Elizabethan fashions; but her life and the life of her lover were essentially and terribly vital and true. Byron has his facts all right, and notes are appended to show his knowledge of the authorities, but the vitality is lacking. Sardanapalus and Myrrha are abstractions of German philosophy, not real beings. In detail, too, Byron fails. Sometimes his work reminds us of earlier "chronicle histories," for, like their authors, he often allows stage direction to do what should have been done in dialogue or by hearsay. In III. i the rebels

charge the King and SALEMENES *with their Troops, who defend*

themselves till the Arrival of ZAMES, *with the Guard before mentioned. The Rebels are then driven off, and pursued by* SALEMENES, *&c. As the King is going to join the pursuit,* BELESES *crosses him.*

Beleses is wounded and disarmed, and, as the King is about to despatch him,

A party of Rebels enter and rescue BELESES. *They assail the King, who, in turn, is rescued by a party of his Soldiers, who drive the Rebels off.*

What a pother of rescuings, and what a useless movement on the stage! The wordless action recalls alike these crude Elizabethan histories and the even cruder melodramas of Byron's own time. *The Two Foscari* (1821) was originally published in the same volume as *Cain* and *Sardanapalus*, and shows a return to the historical atmosphere of *Marino Faliero*. There is not much good that can be said of it as a play; its qualities are almost wholly poetic. *Werner* (D.L. Dec. 1830) carries us to a different sphere, one familiar enough indeed, for we are in the company of Schiller's *Räuber*. A certain praise is due to this work, particularly because of the restrained close of the drama; but after all *Werner* is little more than a superior melodrama with the distressed Werner, the villain Stralenheim and the gloomy setting of the ruined palace. Once more the unreality, the lack of vital qualities, take away from the value of the drama. Thus even Byron failed; and, if he could not succeed, what hope was there from the others?

Before glancing at some independent plays, it may be well to make a rapid survey of those major writers who, in the succeeding decades, were acclaimed as masters and seemed likely to give strength to the stage. Among these, possibly the most famous is James Sheridan Knowles, author of over a dozen poetic or semi-poetic comedies and tragedies[1]. Again, a consideration of his work may help towards an understanding of the age. Knowles' early work, *Leo, or The Gypsy* (Waterford, 1810) and *Brian Boroihme* (Belfast, 1811; C.G. April

[1] On Knowles see the *Life* (1872) written by his son and the interesting essay in Horne's *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844). A discussion of *Virginius* appears in A. Filon, *The English Stage* (1897).

1837), was almost entirely melodramatic, but with *Caius Gracchus* (Belfast, 1815; D.L. Nov. 1823) he attempted something more ambitious. Like all the others, Knowles had to return to older models, so that his hero is simply a kind of popular Coriolanus, Cornelia is another hard Roman mother, Licinia is a second Virgilia, soft and timorous, with another Roman lady, Livia, recalling Valeria. The language on the whole is fine, and Gracchus' first entry at the Forum is undoubtedly striking. Most noticeable of all, however, is the genuine attempt to delineate a tragic flaw in the hero, the proud revenge emotions in Gracchus at once giving dignity to his character and compassing his overthrow. One feels here the undoubted possibility of true greatness, and we cannot cavil at contemporaries for discovering in the play an heroic note of majestic proportions. Having succeeded with a Roman theme, Knowles returned to the same atmosphere for his next play, *Virginius*, written for, but rejected by, Kean. After an original production at Glasgow (1820) it was soon accepted by Macready and successfully performed at Covent Garden in May 1820. Again reminiscent of Shakespeare, the play of *Virginius* retraces the same ground covered centuries before by the anonymous *Apius and Virginia* and by Webster's homonymous tragedy. The main story remains, of course, the same, telling how Appius sees Virginia, the betrothed of Icilius; how she is claimed as his slave; how she is stabbed by her father, who finally goes mad and strangles the evil Appius. There is no question that the treatment is striking, yet there is one fatal weakness accurately diagnosed by Horne in his essay on Macready[1]. "The only way," he says, "in which Mr Knowles personifies our age, is in his truly domestic feeling"—

> In what consists the interest and force of his popular play of *Virginius*? The domestic feeling. The costume, the setting, the decorations are heroic. We have Roman tunics, but a modern English heart,—the scene is the Forum, but the sentiments those of the "Bedford Arms." The affection of the father for his daughter —the pride of the daughter in her father, are the main principles

[1] See *A New Spirit of the Age* (World's Classics edition), p. 304.

of the play, and the pit and galleries and even much of the boxes are only *perplexed* with the lictors and the Decemviri, and the strange garments of the actors.

Yet this criticism, true as it may be, indicates that Knowles was at least so far ahead of his companions that he endeavoured to treat his theme in a vivid, rather than in an artificial, manner. This domesticity, foolish as at times it may appear, is a thousandfold more to be treasured than the spurious heroicism of other authors. After *Virginius* Knowles turned to other spheres of interest. His following play, *William Tell* (D.L. May 1825), narrates, rather slightly, of the exploits of the Swiss hero; its treatment reverts to the author's earlier melodramatic proclivities. These melodramatic tendencies were continued in *Alfred the Great; or, The Patriot King* (D.L. April 1831), written on a theme obviously popular at the time[1]. We are shown here everything of interest in the life of the Saxon monarch, from the tending of the cakes to the most magnanimous and heroic actions. Obviously Knowles was suing for success along the lines of the "illegitimate" stage. This was succeeded by *The Hunchback* (C.G. April 1832), a much better production, clearly recalling the style of Middleton. The Hunchback is Master Walter, supposedly the agent of the Earl of Rochdale. His daughter, Julia, is loved by Sir Thomas Clifford, but is rejected by him on her assuming the giddy fashionable airs of town life. Eventually Julia's idiosyncrasies are cured and Walter reveals himself as the real earl. In reality the play is a serious comedy with a purpose; its characterisation prevents its being dull; and the language is not so hopelessly artificial as that of many other plays of the time. Equally well told is *The Wife: A Tale of Mantua* (C.G. April 1833), where the theme of Italian intrigue is embraced. Here Mariana (acted by Ellen Tree) finds her lost lover in Leonardo Gonzaga, rightful Duke of Mantua (acted by Charles Kean). The deposed duke, Ferrardo, plots with St Pierre to slander her, but her innocence is proved, partly through the agency

[1] It provided material for the plays of Mrs Faucit (Norwich, 1811), H. M. Milner (Cob. 1824) and I. Pocock (C.G. 1827).

of St Pierre, who, in his dying hours, is discovered to be her brother. Unfortunately, the long-lost lover and brother of this plot give to the whole play an air of unreality, and it is evident how far astray the Elizabethan proclivities were leading even such capable dramatists as Knowles. Finally, we reach *The Daughter* (D.L. Nov. 1836), where melodrama once more triumphs, but where contemporary themes are dealt with. Domesticity colours the whole of the play, and, in melodramatic-wise, innocence in the persons of Edward and Marian dominates, even if at times hard pressed, over villainy in the person of the murderous Norris. One feels, in reading this play, that if only Knowles could have escaped from melodrama on the one hand and from Elizabethanism on the other, he might have done something notable for the stage. As it is, many of his plays are but glorified tales of black evil and white innocence; while a *Virginius* is marred by the conflicting styles—by a desire to mirror the general tendencies of his own age and by an imposed necessity of following the masters of Shakespeare's day. Success, in Knowles' work, is near, yet is not attained.

Very similar to that of Knowles is the achievement of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton, who began his dramatic career in the very year of the production of *The Daughter*. *The Duchess de la Vallière* appeared at Covent Garden in January 1837, and this was followed by a series of other plays, among which *The Lady of Lyons* (C.G. Feb. 1838), *Richelieu* (C.G. March 1839) and *Money* (H.[2] Dec. 1840) are among the more important. Lytton's work in the dramatic sphere is a hesitating compromise between the legitimate and the illegitimate, with just a touch of something which seems to suggest that this author, like Knowles, was groping darkly towards something new. *The Lady of Lyons; or, Love and Pride* is, of course, his most famous drama, and it has to be confessed that it possesses something of a genuine, as opposed to a spurious, dramatic note. The story, which is well known, tells how Beauseant and Glavis, slighted by Pauline, dress the poor Claude Melnotte as a prince and get her married to him. Stung by shame when first she discovers the cheat,

Pauline comes to love the low-born youth and discovers a new humanity in her love. Here, almost for the first time, do we catch the accents of the new French style of playwriting—modern accents which well indicate the true power which Lytton possessed. The easy construction, the comparatively natural dialogue and the general atmosphere of the play all strike a new note. It is interesting to observe that the theme had been dramatised at least once before Lytton adopted it, and was also dealt with again after the production of his play. In 1824 George Croly had acted his *Pride shall have a Fall* (C.G. March 1824), "A Comedy... with Songs," where the theme of the false prince is treated farcically. One realises how little Lytton had to fear from his rival when one reads the following piece of dialogue:

Stephano [the real Prince de Pindemonte]. All is easily explained:—In the Italian wars, I sent my infant heir...to the cure of Anselmo....He was a villain....He substituted his boy for mine....Then dreading inquiry, he changed his name to Ventoso, and brought up this gallant wooer (*To* LORENZO) in obscurity. How I have obtained this knowledge so lately, how I obtained the Vice-Royalty for the purpose of a closer search, how I preserved my incognito till the search was complete, you shall hear at the banquet, to which I now invite you all.

Torrento. Your Highness! since you have the talent of finding out sons, perhaps you can find out fathers too. Whose son am I? somebody's, I suppose.

Ste. In looking for the Captain, I accidentally traced your career. I found your errors more of the head than of the heart. You have your liberty. Count and Countess, you must resign your titles.

Ven. With all my heart.

Ste. And, with them, Anselmo's estate.

Ven. Ruin! I'm not worth a sequin.

Countess. I'm thunderstruck.

Ste. Torrento, stand forth; *you* are Anselmo's heir! *You* are the banker's son!

—a fair piece of ordinary dialogue such as is to be found in hundreds of plays of this period, and one which serves as a fitting comparison for the dialogue in Lytton's play. Six years after the appearance of the latter drama Moncrieff

essayed the same theme, producing *The Beauty of Lyons* (S.W. Feb. 1842), "A Domestic Drama" in which the humble bellows-mender turns out to be the real Marquis Montlimort. Here the story is dealt with seriously and there is a touch of real feeling in the crisis scenes. It will be remembered that part of the same plot is introduced into Browning's *Pippa Passes* (1841), the art students there reminding us a little of their prototypes in Moncrieff's play. For some reason this story of pride captured the emotions of contemporaries. *The Lady of Lyons* saw regular revivals up to the end of the century, and a series of later burlesques—H. J. Byron's *The Lady of Lyons; or, Twopenny Pride and Pennytence* (Strand, Feb. 1858), H. C. Merivale's *The Lady of Lyons Married and Settled* (Gaiety, Oct. 1878) and R. Reece's *The Lady of Lyons Married and Claude Unsettled* (Glasgow, Sept. 1884)—goes to prove continued popularity.

Money (H.[2] 1840), although called a comedy, has an atmosphere similar to that of Lytton's other famous play. The theme is unduly sentimental, but the dialogue is vivid and the treatment is much more natural than, let us say, that of Morris's drama with a like plot, *The Secret* (1799). Lytton knows well how to develop dramatic contrast and how to secure concentration. Making Evelyn the centre of his work he is able on the one hand to reveal the devoted tenderness of Clara and on the other the selfish ambition of Georgina. As a serious drama of manners this play also points on to Robertson. In reading it, one realises that by 1840 the age was growing just a trifle weary of melodramatic romance, was seeking at one and the same time for a return to classical precision and more ordinary themes. *Money* is modern; out of it and out of the domestic melodramas of the illegitimate theatre grew that type of drama which ultimately led to the *Strifes* and *Justices* of the present day. Perhaps, in the attention given to Lytton's novels, hardly sufficient praise has been given to Lytton as a dramatist.

Among the other dramatists who, during these decades, attempted to support the legitimate style on the stage Miss Mitford, Talfourd and Browning are the more important,

but all of these carry us back from the modern note of Lytton to the "poetic" style of Maturin, Knowles and Milman. Thomas Noon Talfourd and Mary Russell Mitford[1] must inevitably be associated together, for it was the former who, with his usual unselfish encouragement, helped to guide and make known the novelist and poetess. Her first important play was *Foscari*, produced originally by provincial actors and eventually performed at Covent Garden in November 1826, after the publication of Byron's drama on the same theme. Miss Mitford, not wanting in the writer's self-esteem, saw fit to censure both Byron and his work, but her play, strong as it is in the crisis scenes, can never, for power of poetry or strength of characterisation, be compared with his. Her Doge is a lifeless creation and the hero, Francesco, is little more than a white-washed puppet. *Julian*, her second ambitious play, had already been acted at Covent Garden in March 1823, with Macready in the cast, and after the fair success of these two she again attempted an Italian theme in her best-known drama, *Rienzi* (D.L. Oct. 1828), where, as the authoress directly informs us, she has attempted to shadow forth in her hero the Napoleon of the earlier years. Unquestionably interesting and dealing capably with the contending factions of aristocrats and populace, it fails, like all her other dramas, because of the artificiality of both scene and language. Somehow, these Italian stories, to which many of the Elizabethans gave strength and dignity, collapse when treated in this later age. The reason probably lies in the altered spirit of the time. When a Webster dealt with a White Devil he was writing in an atmosphere when Englishmen could know of that Italian fever at first hand; he could take many of his characters from the life around him in the London taverns. Now, in the age of Mary Mitford, all that was far away. In the midst of the Romanised setting of *Virginius* peers forth the spirit of Victorianism, and the Julians and their companions are only mental images, not real men.

[1] On her work see C. Hill, *Mary Russell Mitford and her Surroundings* (1920).

Talfourd, too, in spite of his undoubted talents, followed along the same path. *Ion* (C.G. May 1836) won for its legal author an immediate literary fame. Printed in a strictly private edition, its praises were sung by Talfourd's friends, and, on its production at Covent Garden, it sprang immediately into popular esteem. Yet what is there in this drama to call for our attention now? In spite of his admiration of Wordsworth and the romantic poets, Talfourd was a classicist, esteeming Addison's *Cato* as one of the greater dramas of all time; accordingly in *Ion* he chooses a classic theme and, in its treatment, holds to the Unities. Occasional beauty there is in the language, but usually the blank verse drags wearily forward, with an irritating run-on effect which brings many passages down to the levels of awkward prose. The following is not untypical:

> I know enough to feel for thee; I know
> Thou hast endured the vilest wrong that tyranny
> In its worst frenzy can inflict;—yet think
> O think! before the irrevocable deed
> Shuts out all thought, how much of power's excess
> Is theirs who raise the idol:—do we groan
> Beneath the personal force of this rash man,
> Who forty summers since hung at the breast
> A playful weakling; whom the heart unnerves;
> The north-wind pierces; and the hand of death
> May, in a moment, change to clay as vile
> As that of the scourged slave whose chains it severs?[1]

The same style is continued in *The Athenian Captive* (H.[2] Aug. 1838), which, originally written for Macready, was eventually produced at the Haymarket under Webster. In spite of the classical tendencies of the author, the interest here is hopelessly dissipated, and our minds and attention are constantly being shifted from Ismene to Creon, and thence to Thoas, Hyllus and Creusa. In *Glencoe; or, The Fate of the Macdonalds* (H.[2] May 1840) there is an apparent movement away from this over-strict classicism, but even in *Glencoe* Talfourd fails. The love story of Helen Campbell is not told in an interesting way and nowhere are we made to

[1] II. ii.

feel either the real horrors of the massacre or the tragic emotions which Talfourd wished to arouse. Like that of the others, his manner is distant, and reality seems to rumble far off from his scenes of artificiality and meaningless talk.

And then we reach Browning, who, at first sight, like Byron, might have been expected to do so much for the fortunes of the English stage[1]. Browning was, above all other things, interested in life. His portraits of *Men and Women* show a greater catholicity of interest and a greater profundity than is to be found elsewhere in the whole poetic sphere of his time. His attitude towards style is different from that of many of his contemporaries, for his sole purpose was the expressing, as directly and as vividly as possible, what for him was truth. No purely artificial leanings towards the Elizabethans were likely to over-rule his saner judgments; no over-extravagant romanticism or over-chill classicism was likely to sway his mind. If the poetic drama were to be made something truly great, it seemed as if the person who alone could make it so was Browning. Yet Browning's dramas are, like the others, mostly unacted and perhaps unactable. We turn to *Strafford* (C.G. May 1837), written at the request of Macready, and we come away from a perusal of it with a vague, indeterminate impression. The loyalty of the title-character stands out, as does the resolute, fixed purpose of Pym, but there is no true dramatic atmosphere here. We seem to have been floating over a sea of words, words that may express personality, but cannot express dramatic personality. Most of Browning's dramas are even more verbose than *Strafford*, for many were written purely for the press and not for the stage. Moreover, with the passing of the years, his style grew harsher and his meaning less clear, so that *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (D.L. Feb. 1843), in spite of its unquestionably affecting scenes, is difficult to follow and often definitely obscure. Browning was not destined to be a leader of a new poetic drama.

Thus did one after another of those greater writers who attempted the legitimate stage fail; only Lytton, out of them

[1] See W. Fairfax, *Robert Browning and the Drama* (1891).

all, seemed to be pointing forward towards something new, and Lytton was the least poetic. The effort to write legitimate drama, of course, was not confined to a bare dozen authors, and many attempted in these years the so-called "higher" style. Even the illegitimates occasionally crept into the more aristocratic fold, usually creeping out again so soon as they found that they had left their bread and butter behind them. Almost all these plays are similar to those which we have already considered. The themes are all themes of the past, and little effort is made to secure anything that approaches towards vitality of treatment. The efforts are scattered well over the five decades, although it must be admitted that there is a marked improvement in characterisation and in dialogue after 1840, due, apparently, to the coalescing of naturalistic melodrama and of the legitimate type through the freeing of the minor theatres. Dimond's *Adrian and Orrila; or, A Mother's Vengeance* (C.G. Nov. 1806) may be selected as a typical prose piece of the earlier years. The story of the long-lost child and the faithful love, told with many echoes of Shakespearian dialogue[1], is one of hackneyed proportions and dismal artificiality. The anonymous *Conrad; or, The Usurper* (Birmingham, 1821) provides the equally familiar Continental theme, with the usual inflated and unnatural dialogue. The Germanised sentimentalism is favoured by James Boaden in *The Maid of Bristol* (H.[2] Aug. 1803), which concentrates on the devoted love of Stella. German romance, Shakespearian dialogue and undramatic philosophy lead astray W. H. Hoskins in *De Valencourt* (Norwich, 1842), where the story is told of the ruin of Fernando de Valencourt and his fair wife Euphrania. None of these deserve lengthier attention.

There is, however, a group of plays, now wholly forgotten, of the forties of the century which occasionally strike a higher note. One of these is *The Wife's Secret* (H.[2] Jan. 1848) by George W. Lovell. Cavalier themes were fairly popular at this time, but for the most part these were dealt with in a comic-melodramatic manner and provided the usual

[1] See *supra*, p. 62.

stock persons in their distressed lovers, villains, comic serving-men and foolish but honest maids. Major Murray and Lady Somerford, Sir Richard Wroughton, John Duck and Patty Pottle in Planché's *The Jacobite* (H.[2] June 1847) may be taken as concrete examples of these. In Lovell's play, however, there is something different. The story of the drama may have a certain familiarity, but the characterisation is individual. Lady Eveline Amyott succours her Cavalier brother, Lord Arden. Her husband returns to his home from a journey and is led by Jabez Sneed to doubt her fidelity. Unfortunately the lady is bound by an oath not to reveal her brother's hiding-place and tragedy is narrowly averted at the end. The dramatic situations are good in every way, and, although one feels that the author is a trifle hampered by the blank verse tradition, this seems a drama really worthy of praise. It is certainly one of the best plays I have read in this period, and I imagine that its strength comes from the fact that the author, writing from his heart, is not misled by high-sounding but false ideals of legitimacy. There is here the union, so long desired, of the two dramatic spheres.

It has to be confessed, of course, that many of the dramas produced in this time still kept to the older themes. Kenney in *The Sicilian Vespers* (Surrey, Sept. 1840), adapting *Les Vêspres Siciliennes* of Casimir Delavigne, has remembered Otway in his story of conspiracy with love as a conflicting element, but the dialogue here is much more natural than we should have met with in 1820 and there is a certain dignity in the characters. This survey may be ended with an account of two other similar plays, one of slightly earlier date, Douglas Jerrold's *Thomas à Becket* (Surrey, Nov. 1829) and Leigh Hunt's *A Legend of Florence* (C.G. Feb. 1840). The former, written in prose, aims at, and almost reaches, true tragic effect. The absence of the Elizabethan element is noticeable, and, remembering that it was written for the Surrey, one feels again that the hope of later drama lay in the illegitimate type. Hunt's play is likewise free of reminiscences of earlier drama, and shows a power of construction and an ease of dialogue which makes us wish that its author had devoted

more time to the stage. The theme is not very original. Agolanti has married Ginevra, who is loved by Antonio Rondinelli. Her husband ill-treats her, but the passion of the two lovers remains pure. Finally death seems to come to her, and she is rescued from the grave by Antonio. On Agolanti's arriving to drag her back to misery her spirit at length rebels; she refuses and, in the resulting mêlée, Agolanti is slain. The main characters, however, are well outlined and are excellently contrasted with the honest gay friends of Antonio—Fulvio da Riva, a poet, and Cesare Colonna, an officer in the Pope's guard.

Such a play as this shows how the other poets failed. The story is only a "legend of Florence" yet Hunt has been able to give it true life. We may condemn his work because of the unreality of the theme—for here he followed the others—but his production has a strength which is wanting elsewhere. Had all the legitimate poets been as Lovell and Hunt, the story of our nineteenth century drama might have been vastly different. The Milmans, the Maturins, the Talfourds—even the Byrons and the Brownings—merely led it astray.

II. *Comedies*

If the early nineteenth century failed to produce a really fine drama and a poignant tragedy, it failed even more dismally in the realm of the comic muse. Some of the illegitimate farces have rollicking fun in them; few of the five-act comedies possess the faintest spark of liveliness. This failure, too, was appreciated by the age; G. A. à Beckett in his *Scenes from the Rejected Comedies* (1844) speaks, seriously for once, of "that almost extinct species—the writer of a successful Five Act Comedy." Various styles were tried, but all are marked by restraint, by slavish imitation, by a want of that force which is so difficult alike to capture and to analyse, the *vis comica*. These styles may, for convenience, be roughly classified, and attention paid to a few examples of each. The poetic romantic comedy found a

true exponent only in Tobin[1], but alongside of that romantic species, and often borrowing some of its atmosphere, there is the ordinary serious comedy, closely allied to the "dramas" which have been considered in the preceding section. Connected with these in their turn are the sentimental comedies, recalling the styles of a previous age and often mingling, Reynolds-wise, study of contemporary manners with humane and moral precepts. A few plays exist solely for their humours or their intrigue, but of this class there are not many, for humours and intrigue were more commonly drawn into the service of farce.

One may start with the serious type—perhaps that which most suited the temper of the period. Very few of these unfortunately deal with problems real enough to be interesting, and the prudery of the time prevented anything like free expression. It has been already noted[2] that contemporaries thought M. R. Lacy's *The Two Friends* (H.[2] July 1828) "one of the most immoral and dangerous dramas" they had ever witnessed, the reason being that the author had dared to show a Herbert and Elinor, apparently brother and sister, who, on discovering that they were not of kin, confessed love to one another and married. There is no suggestiveness in the treatment, yet even here the heavy hand of public opinion descended severely. Most of the plays, therefore, dealt with situations of a kind that were not likely to offend and in a manner hopelessly artificial. In *Secret Service* (D.L. April 1834), for example, J. R. Planché, adapting from a play by Mélesville and Duveyrier, tells of a plot against Napoleon, where the Curé Perrin becomes a secret service agent without being aware of it. The piece is saved by a number of equivocal situations not badly dealt with, but little praise can be given to the work as a whole. We are as far here from real life as we are in the midst of the *Ions* and the *Ethwalds*. Like Planché other "illegitimate" writers essayed the full comedy form, but none succeeded in rising above mawkish sentimentality. Buckstone's *Victorine; or, "I'll Sleep on it"* (Adel. Oct. 1831) and *The Rake and his Pupil; or, Folly, Love,*

[1] See *supra*, p. 164.

[2] See *supra*, p. 15.

and Marriage (Adel. Nov. 1833) are typical. In the latter Rosambert, the rake, tutors the young Chevalier de Florville in the ways of the world. Florville, throughout three-quarters of the play, proves an apt pupil, but in the end, after being severely wounded, returns to his old manner of life and his country love, Sophia. It may be observed that many of these comedy dramas are set abroad. This may be partly due to the fact that quite a considerable number were adapted from the French, but the major cause seems to have been the fear of bringing the scenes too near to actual English life. Occasionally one feels that, given more freedom and better models, an individual dramatist might have been able to produce something finer than his actual accomplishment. One notes, for example, the able portraiture of Count Bertrand de Rantzau in Alfred Bunn's *The Minister and the Mercer* (D.L. Feb. 1834)[1], but such portraits stand by themselves, isolated and lonely, and all is vitiated by the distance of the scene and the artificialised restraint everywhere apparent.

The sentimental comedies for the most part flounder and wallow in the most dismal, the most moral and the most impossible of emotions, mingling with these emotions farcical humour of a kind already popularised by Frederick Reynolds. R. F. Jameson's *Living in London* (H.[2] Aug. 1815) thus pictures a hero Count Clamorcourt, of a good heart, but supreme vanity. He is led astray by Lady Killcare, but realises his own folly in the third act. Lady Clamorcourt's virtue is, of course, doubted in the play—here because Vivid takes the name of Neville, her brother. Centum, Motley, Specious and Potiphar provide the comic element. Moncrieff in *Monsieur Mallet; or, My Daughter's Letter* (Adel. Jan. 1829) depends for his comic relief mainly on dialect and the follies of the stage-struck Indian, Oronooko. The serious part tells of the attempts of Mallet, an exiled Frenchman, to discover in America his lost daughter, who has a lover in Orlando Stapleton. Miss Marianne Chambers, for her part, provides us in *The School for Friends* (D.L.

[1] This is an adaptation of Scribe's *Bertrand et Raton* (1833).

Dec. 1805) with professional and class types, introducing Mathew Daw, an honest Quaker, a neglectful Sir Edward Epworth and a hopelessly dull gallant, Lord Belmour. Stock characters fill out the dreary plot of Kenney's *The World!* (D.L. March 1808), where Cheviot is a proud poet in distress, who turns out to be the long-lost son of Davenant, after he has relieved the distresses of his unknown mother and sister. He is set off by Echo, a Reynoldised character who apes the follies of fashion but possesses that which, in this age, seemed to atone for all—a good heart. Following Morton's line in *Speed the Plough* (C.G. Feb. 1800), the younger Colman provided in *The Poor Gentleman* (C.G. Feb. 1801) a melodramatic comedy with a reproduction of Farmer Ashfield in Harrowby. Here the immaculate hero Frederick succeeds in rescuing the distressed heroine, Emily, from the clutches of the would-be seducer, Sir Charles Cropland. A fair stage Irishman, Dennis Brulgruddery, is all that saves the same author's *John Bull; or, The Englishman's Fireside* (C.G. March 1803) from sheer inanity, and this in spite of high contemporary praise and considerable theatrical success[1]. Sometimes the themes show just a touch of an attempt to reach a problem, but the touch is faint and hesitating. In John Poole's *Tribulation; or, Unwelcome Visitors* (H.[2] May 1825), confessedly taken from *Un Moment d'Imprudence*, Dorrington goes out secretly for an evening's amusement with his friend Forrester. Mrs Dorrington, also secretly, does the same. They meet, unknown to each other, and the husband barely escapes throwing his wife into the arms of Sir George Faddle. Naturally there is a sentimental reconciliation of the pair after many fears and misunderstandings. A similar note is struck in Morton's *Education* (C.G. April 1813), a comedy which shows the almost complete ruin of Templeton through the extravagance of his over-educated wife and his son Vincent. The play is eked out by a group of exaggerated characters, notably Damper, the true friend, Aspic, the parasite, and Sir Guy Stanch, the country Squire.

[1] See particularly Dunlap's *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke* (1813), i. 229.

Among the sentimental dramatists, Mrs Elizabeth Inchbald, after as before 1800, stood out predominant, but her work has little save an historical value. *To Marry or Not to Marry* (C.G. Feb. 1805) is not unrepresentative of her later productions. Here Hester runs away from a disagreeable match, finding an asylum in the house of Mrs Sarah Mortland, whose bookish and hitherto anti-matrimonial brother falls in love with her. Several of the sentimental dramas, as has been seen above, deal partly at least with vice, and, as has been suggested[1], a number of the playwrights looked back with not unlonging eyes to the days of Charles II. Thus Douglas Jerrold, author of many worthless comedies but a force in his own time, penned a play on *Nell Gwynne; or, The Prologue* (C.G. Jan. 1833), in which is shown the first meeting of the king and the orange-girl, with the episode of the broad-brimmed hat prologue to *The Conquest of Granada*. Similarly Moncrieff in *The "Tobit's Dog!"* (Strand, April 1838) presents us with a fanciful adventure of the gay Rochester, who is made to sacrifice his intended, Lady Diana Clarges, to his friend Savile. Jerrold's case is not untypical of the time. He was unquestionably a wit, and in some of his lesser "illegitimate" plays there is more than a hint of true joyousness; but, whenever he essays the five-act form, his genuine laughter seems to vanish. Characters and plot in *Bubbles of the Day* (C.G. Feb. 1842) are of the most artificial substance, and the author's attempt to show sprightliness in Pamela and in Florentia has a dismal result. There is a suggestion of a "problem" in *Time Works Wonders* (H.[2] April 1845), but here again the purely comic portions are pitiful in the extreme. We cannot laugh at the "humours" either of Miss Tucker or of Professor Truffles, and even although we may feel a passing interest in this theme of youthful affection and parental opposition, we must inevitably lay the play aside as largely worthless because of its constant note of frigid sentimentalism. The same criticism is true of *The Prisoner of War* (D.L. March 1842). Here there is a trifle more of spirit, and patriotic boastfulness is not ill-painted in

[1] See *supra*, p. 17.

the figure of Pallmall, whose philosophy it is that, if the soldier's duty is to "die" for his country, it is the duty of the civilian to "lie" for it. There is, indeed, a touch of true humour in the letter written by this character, who is prepared to see everything better done in England than in France, from his prison-cell at Verdun:

Fortress of Verdun, June, 1803. *My dear Polly,—I scratch you these few lines like a mole under ground. The prison is tolerably strong, but not to be spoken of after Newgate. As for their locks, they haven't one fit for a tea-caddy. The rats at night come in regiments. We're allowed no candle; but we can feel, as they run over our faces, that they must be contemptible in the eyes of Englishmen. I am teaching a spider to dance; but find the spiders here nothing to the spiders in our summer-house at Hornsey.*

Such touches of humour, however, are few and far between, and are almost completely obscured by the highly sentimental affection of the secretly married lovers, Clarina and Basil Firebrace. Only in one respect does Jerrold display any quality that is vital and new. Quite clearly, he was experimenting in dramatic technique. Of this two examples may be taken. In *Time Works Wonders* his first act takes place in a "*Room in a country Inn*" and shows the arrival of a runaway schoolgirl, the entry of her pursuers and her return. The next act opens on a lodge belonging to Sir Gilbert Norman, there being supposed to have elapsed a period of five years between the two scenes. This may not seem very revolutionary, but, when we consider the familiar plan of most early nineteenth century comedies, there does indeed appear to be in this a promising note of modernity. The second example concerns dramatic dialogue. The "aside," of course, is a device of hoary antiquity, and in the drama of this period it is of constant occurrence. A reading of Jerrold's plays, however, will convince us that in his works these asides appear much more frequently than in the plays of his companions. At first sight, we are inclined to believe that they represent merely the abuse of what was a common failing, but a further examination suggests that they possess a deliberate purpose and that here Douglas Jerrold was holding forth his hand,

if but weakly, to the author of *Strange Interlude*. It may be that we are mistaken here, but Jerrold must at least be given the benefit of the doubt. Like some of the stage craftsmen of the period it is at least possible that, in spite of the commonness and conventionality to be found in his work, he was groping darkly towards something new.

The commonness and the conventionality, however, are the two characteristics which dominate all others. Jerrold's sentimental comedies differ in this respect hardly at all from the many other specimens of the same *genre*. From these it is clear no real good could arise; yet there are one or two associated dramas by other authors which, however faintly, indicate a new spirit at work, which point forward towards the awakening of naturalism in the future. Two examples only need be selected, for after all the signs of promise are by no means great. The first is Peake's *The Title Deeds* (Adel. June 1847), in the main a poor comedy, yet valuable for one scene. The story deals with two themes, one of which concerns the riotous waste of Philip Fustic, and the other of which tells how some title-deeds are lost, how Haywhisp, a cabby, finding them by chance, conceals them for a year. It is the latter which concerns us, for the scenes where we are shown Haywhisp's poverty and his torments of conscience are truly affecting. There is artificiality here, it is true, but there is at least the endeavour to descend from hopeless romance and artificial clichés to the way of real life. The other play is Planché's *Not a Bad Judge* (Lyc. March 1848), which is interesting, not for its scenes of real life, but for its plot. The setting is a Swiss village where a rogue Mariano is masquerading as the Marquis de Treval. Just at the moment when this rascal, having hoodwinked everyone, is about to reap his wicked harvest, old Lavater arrives, and, because of his skill in reading faces, succeeds in unmasking the impostor. Lavater is pictured as a kind of nineteenth century Sherlock Holmes, and in *Not a Bad Judge* we have what is virtually the first of the modern detective dramas. Its importance is slight, yet once more, in the forties of the century, we discover a definite link with the present day.

A still more definite link is perhaps provided in the early work of Dion Boucicault, or Bourcicault, who started his long theatrical career with the production of *A Legend of the Devil's Dyke* in 1838 and first won fame with *London Assurance* in 1841[1]. It is possible to say many vicious things about Boucicault's plays—both those of his youth and those of his age—but we must endeavour, in estimating his worth, to place ourselves in his own age and to read his plays, not in comparison with those of Shaw but in comparison with those many wretched farces with which the mid-nineteenth century theatre was fed. Were there serious question of the influence of Boucicault now, we should have to condemn him as William Archer condemned him in 1882[2], but that time has long passed, so that we can look upon his work impartially, without the prejudicing incentive of passion. From the half-dozen plays which Boucicault wrote between 1838 and 1849, two may be taken here as representative—*London Assurance* (C.G. March 1841) and *The School for Scheming* (H.[2] Feb. 1847). With these may be remembered that shorter sketch, *Used Up* (H.[2] 1844), which has already been dealt with elsewhere[3], and which we found to possess at least a certain individuality and inventiveness. *London Assurance* has something of the same quality. The story itself is an impossible one, and, if we are to make reality our standard of judgment, then we must dismiss the play outright. The question, however, is not one entirely of reality, and there are at least a few points in *London Assurance* that call for our attention. Some of the characters are mere Reynoldised "humours," but others stand out, if not with individuality, at least with a boldness and directness which testifies to a power lacking in the majority of the earlier dramatists. Lady Gay Spanker is not a masterpiece, yet she has a vivacity of her own and a

[1] On his life see Townsend Walsh, *The Career of Dion Boucicault* (Publications of the Dunlap Society, Third Series, 1915, i). A good account of Boucicault's life and activities in America is given in A. H. Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (1923), pp. 368–94.

[2] *English Dramatists of To-day* (1882), pp. 38–48.

[3] See *supra*, p. 132.

genuine comic appeal. There is, too, in Dazzle a figure of quiet fun, and the situations in which he appears are conceived with a decided sense of the theatre. There is no wonder that *London Assurance* created a slight stir in 1841, for, however near in spirit it was to the sentimental manners style of Reynolds, it yet marked an advance upon the average contemporary production and indicated that the way was being prepared for Robertson. *The School for Scheming* has similar qualities. The plot is undoubtedly sentimental, being designed to show the false standards created by money and fashion as opposed to the natural goodness in an honest and not over-civilised heart. The fashionables or would-be fashionables include Claude Plantagenet, a decrepit scion of the nobility, Lord Fipley, a brainless and rather vulgar youth of great possessions, and the MacDunnum, a man whose greatest aim in life is to be a capitalist. Opposed to these are Helen Plantagenet, whose schooling in Mrs French's academy for snobs has not reft from her some honest feelings, Craven Acton, a man of fashionable pretensions but of good purpose, and old Sykes, his father (although that fact is unknown to him), who for years has watched over the career of his only son. In the course of the play we are carried rapidly from Plantagenet's poor lodgings to Mrs French's ball-room and thence to the environs of Boulogne, accompanying the various characters in their chase through life. Much is artificial, for Boucicault has retained many of those exaggerated tricks which were inherited by the forties of the century from the twenties; the jokes are often feeble; and the painting of contemporary manners is executed in a style which exhibits false proportion and inharmonious colours. To set against this, however, we must consider the slight touches of greater subtlety in the characterisation of Helen, a girl of good heart educated in evil if fashionable surroundings and torn between obedience to her father's wishes and her slowly awakening love of Craven Acton. There is not much here that is worthy of high praise, but there is potentiality at least. An earlier dramatist would have presented this girl in the good old standard way—wholly lovable and completely opposed

to the precepts of Mrs French's academy. It was a blessing that the English stage got beyond Boucicault; at the same time it was a blessing that, by 1840, it had reached his ways of art.

It is not necessary here to spend more time on the other comedies of humours and of intrigue, for universal darkness covers all. The Jonsonian style could rarely give anything more than unnatural exaggerated farcical characters, such as the talkative Lady Topple in Bell's *Temper* (H.[2] May 1847), and intrigue had lost its verve and dash. Thomas Archer in *Marguerite's Colours; or, Passing the Frontier* (Lyc. July 1847) was about as *risqué* as the nineteenth century could allow. He actually permits a married woman—Marguerite, wife of the old Duke de Croissy—to have a lover, even if he is only a rejected one, in Captain Sanspeur. Most of the type are merely dull imitations of such plays as *The Belle's Stratagem*. Charles Dance's *The Beulah Spa* (Olym. Nov. 1833), where a gay Caroline (acted by Vestris) is captured by an honest Sydney Beauchamp, may be taken as a representative example.

This is truly a vale of tears. Where laughter should sport lithesomely, we have only awkward movement, moral sentiments and the hoarse rough guffaw of unintellectual vulgarity. The eighteenth century, in the realm of comedy at least, I believe to have been unduly neglected. This age shows not the slightest spark of the true comic fire, although in other spheres of drama it was doing pioneer work for our contemporaries.

CHAPTER V

THE STILL-BORN DRAMA

I. *Tragedies*

It has been remarked above that no sure distinction is to be made in this time between the acted and the unacted drama[1]; some dramatists such as Talfourd penned their plays with no thought of the stage and saw those plays presented on the boards; others wrote with fond theatrical ambitions and had to condescend to the printing press for making known their wares. If, however, there is no certain classification to be made along these lines, the great fact remains that this period abounds in dramas of a purely "poetic" kind which either were never performed in their own times or have never, even to this day, found actors and actresses to interpret them. There is, therefore, an insistent necessity for considering these dramas as a class, and for endeavouring to estimate their worth as dramas. It is not my purpose here to deal with such productions as the *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley, which obviously makes no pretence towards theatrical form, but, even leaving aside such works, we find a great mass of tragedies and of comedies, written by some of our most famous poets and prose-writers, which stand completely apart from the regular fare of the playhouses. The question which is raised, therefore, in this present chapter is the same as that raised elsewhere in this book[2]. We have to consider whether the theatres or the poets were at fault that so few of their dramas were produced, and the question here must be answered, not along the lines of generalisation, but from concrete examples.

It may be convenient, in this summary, to consider these poetic playwrights, if not according to strict chronological sequence, at least according to the various groups into which

[1] See *supra*, p. 58.

[2] See *supra*, pp. 59–78.

they fall. We have, thus, the Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott group, followed in the early decades by the Shelley, Byron, Keats group. This in turn gives way to the Tennyson, Browning set which leads us to the year 1850, and the arising of yet later bands of dramatic authors.

Two things served to destroy the dramatic worth of the productions of the earliest romantic poets—didacticism and the German influence. Wordsworth has written poetry of a visionary splendour and a profound emotion unequalled elsewhere, Coleridge has given us dream-pictures of a truly magical beauty, even Southey occasionally rises to a moderate poetic height—but all of these, and all of their followers, have about them a touch of the surplice. They were all so immersed in the study of philosophy and of political thought, they were all so downright in their convictions, that they felt it incumbent upon them to inform the world in direct terms of their opinions and their beliefs. This didacticism mars the lesser poetry of Wordsworth and of Coleridge alike, and, unfortunately, these poets deemed the dramatic form to be that most fitted for the inculcation of those truths they wished to spread among mankind. All these poets, too, were filled with admiration of German thought and literature. Unfortunately again they took from Germany, not its strength, but its weakness. They became immersed in a vague transcendental philosophy which often they could not appreciate or knew not how to express; they created for themselves, Southey-wise, a spurious mysticism which pretended to be Eastern and was not; they lost sight of the true power of German drama under Lessing and Schiller to dote sentimentally on innocent outlaws and gloomy goblins. Gloriously in poetry they were able to shake off their self-imposed fetters, but drama seemed to call forth only their worst qualities and dismally they trudged along a weary and uninteresting path.

We may dismiss Southey's *Wat Tyler* (1817) as an unfortunate mistake on the part of a very young man, but it is not so easy to pass by either Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (1842; written 1795–6) or Coleridge's *Osorio* (1798), which,

refashioned as *Remorse* was played at Drury Lane in January 1813. Both of these show clearly the impress of German example. *The Borderers* has for its main theme a crime committed with the best possible intentions, and *Remorse* tells of an honest hero, dominated by the most humane sentiments, who is outlawed by an evil brother. In both there is action of a kind, but the trouble with most of the romantic dramatists was that they could not think of action and of character together. These two, in all greater plays, are fused, so that, for example, we cannot think of Hamlet the man apart from the Hamlet story, or of Othello alone away from the tragic scene at Cyprus. A romantic poet, on the other hand, seemed to think of a "passion" first of all, fit that "passion" next to some quite harmless individual, and then add, as a last ingredient, a dash of action unrelated to either. Coleridge's Inquisition scenes are of this nature. At first sight they would appear to indicate that the poet-philosopher was not without his interest in the outward movements of men, but a later consideration shows that these scenes have been introduced solely because the author feels that something is necessary to enliven his lengthy soliloquies and pages of poetic narrative. Both for Coleridge and for Wordsworth it is the abstract passion that counts, Wordsworth writing his drama to prove the thesis that "sin and crime are apt to start from their opposite qualities[1]," and Coleridge, as his later title shows, dealing primarily with a "passion."

If we turn from Wordsworth and Coleridge to Sir Walter Scott, we see the other baneful influence of the German style. Characteristically, the young Scots advocate had chosen for translation at the very beginning of his career Goethe's somewhat rococo *Götz von Berlichingen*, and, as his ballads show, he fell deeply under the spell of that new literature which mingled historical setting with strange diablerie. *Halidon Hill* (1822), described as "A Dramatic Sketch, from Scottish History," may have been an experiment made in the hope of developing a dramatic kind similar to that provided

[1] Preface, *The Borderers*.

in fictional form by the Waverley novels. The usual failure of the romantic poets, however, is seen in Scott's declaration that his play was "in no particular either designed or calculated for the stage[1]," and the language follows the usual line of artificiality leading towards rhetoric and bombast. The same weaknesses are apparent in *The Doom of Devorgoil* (1830) and *The House of Aspen* (Surrey, Nov. 1829). Scott's genius, like that of Dickens, required the aid of narrative for its free expression. In the dramatic form there is lacking entirely that majestic atmosphere which makes atonement for the rigidity of heroes and of heroines and for the stiltedness of a language which, unless it be in the dialect, is unnatural and forced. His style in dramatic dialogue is dull, and he can think of naught in plot beyond a rather pitiful Götz-like presentation of historical fact and legend.

Many other writers in this early period essayed the poetic style but with the same or similar failings. William Godwin's *Antonio; or, The Soldier's Return* (D.L. Dec. 1800) and *Faulkner* (D.L. Dec. 1807), although they were staged (unsuccessfully), have the same tendency towards declamatory periods, the same insistence on a thesis, the same predominance of an abstract passion[2]. Charles Lamb, leaning more towards the Elizabethans, tried to write a drama in *John Woodvil* (1802), originally called (characteristically) *Pride's Cure*, and offered vainly to John Kemble about Christmas 1799. The very first scene gives some promise, but, as the play progresses, all the worst faults of the romantic style become apparent. The theme, which tells of a son's unwilling betrayal of his father, is slight in the extreme, and the conclusion strikes a note unutterably false. All that can be said of *John Woodvil* is that in it Lamb has played the sedulous ape to Beaumont and Fletcher and to Massinger, sprinkling his play, too, with reminiscences of Shakespearian romantic comedy. Beyond a few lines of beauty it does

[1] Advertisement.

[2] B. Sprague Allen has an interesting paper on *William Godwin and the Stage* (*Publ. of the Mod. Lang. Assoc. of America*, 1920, xxviii. 3), but this deals mainly with the fate of his plays in America.

not rise. The characters are vague and shadowy. It is a dream called forth consequent upon the reading of older plays; of value for its time it has nothing. In later years Lamb again essayed the dramatic form, publishing, after rejection by the managers, *The Wife's Trial; or, The Intruding Widow* in *Blackwood's Magazine* (Dec. 1828). Taken from Crabbe's tale of *The Confidant*, this "drama" is no more striking than the other. Mrs Frampton, the chief character, is but ill-drawn, and Selby is wholly unconvincing. Once more the sole merit of the play rests in a few blank verse lines clearly imitated from the Elizabethans.

Minor authors, of course, followed the way of their betters, but naturally with no more success. Andrew Birrell, otherwise unknown to fame, published a sentimental *Henry and Almeria* in 1802, loudly proclaiming that his wares had been stolen and brought upon the stage as *Alfonso*. Even Lewis, one feels, would not wish to filch from such work. The scene is Mexico, and the plot, which deals mainly with faithful love, parental commands, pride and vengeance, puts in contrast the ambitious greed of Europeans and the deep honesty of the savage. The influence of Kotzebue is over all, but the play has representative interest because we can trace below the German atmosphere elements clearly taken from the Elizabethans[1]. These Elizabethanised adaptations of Kotzebuian themes were popular. So too were sentimentalised chronicle histories. Of the latter type, the anonymous *Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots* (1801) may be taken as representative. Here there is additional pathos introduced in the unfortunate loves of Adelaide and George Douglas, although a certain strength comes to the play through the author's deliberate leaving of the Queen before her end. There are individually fine scenes and passages to be discovered in this and in many others of these dramas, but of genuine strength, of vital power, of true tragic nobility and grandeur there is nothing.

[1] Mr U. C. Nagchaudhuri may be right in tracing one episode to *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (unpublished thesis in the University of London).

The tale was eagerly taken up by the Byron and Shelley group. Already the work of the former has been glanced at, for Byron, more than any of the others, was associated with the theatre. The weaknesses inherent in all this work, however, are to be traced in his plays. The constant disdain of the playhouse and the lofty notes prefixed to some of his published dramas show that even here the stage had failed to find its deliverer. His companion, Percy Bysshe Shelley, is, of course, entirely a closet playwright, although again careful consideration must be given to his one purely dramatic work, *The Cenci* (1819), largely because this has been so bepraised by critics and because it has been performed publicly in our own times. Are we to blame the contemporary theatre for refusing it? Are we to esteem it as the greatest play produced in England since the appearance of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*[1]? The question seems a particular one; in reality it has a general significance, for on our answer will depend the attitude we adopt towards the dramatic work of this whole poetic school.

No one can deny that *The Cenci* possesses highest poetic worth, but the question here is not one of poetry but of drama, and on two counts at least it is in this respect defective. A great play, although like *Hamlet* it may arouse a certain amount of doubt and wonder, must sweep definitely from exposition to conclusion. The audience must understand, emotionally if not intellectually, the main atmosphere of the drama and the motives actuating the words and deeds of the characters. In *The Cenci*, however, there is no such dominant and appreciable purpose. We are puzzled—at least we are puzzled in the theatre—at the later actions of Beatrice. There is an explanation, it is true, but that explanation is not provided for us by Shelley himself; it can come only when we have studied his ideas in other works and applied his philosophic principles to this particular play. A tragedy must be a self-contained work of art if it is to

[1] See the discussion on *The Cenci* in *The Saturday Review* (by J. Agate, cxxxiv. Nov. 25, 1922), *The New Statesman* (by M. Baring, xx. Nov. 18, 1922) and *The London Mercury* (vii. Dec. 1922).

be great; *The Cenci* is to be understood only by Shelley enthusiasts.

Apart from this, Shelley displays in his drama that common weakness of all his contemporaries. He is so occupied with the Elizabethan theatre that he echoes and re-echoes mechanically the phraseology and the situations of Shakespearian days. "And yet I need not speak," cries Cenci,

> Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
> O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
> What now I think! Thou pavement which I tread
> Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
> Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
> But not of my intent!—

and in these words Shelley displays, first, his failure to deal with a theatrical convention, and secondly, the imitative quality of his style. This is made even more palpable in the finest scene of the drama—the murder of Cenci. It is the finest scene, yet it is but a variation of the murder-scene in *Macbeth*. "Is it accomplished?" cries Beatrice. "What?" says Marzio, and then the "Did you not call?" of Olimpio's, the "When?" of Beatrice, and Olimpio's "Now" seem borrowed word for word from Shakespeare. The lines—"If it were done when 'tis done"—are monotonously echoed and varied.

> O, fear not
> What may be done, but what is left undone,

cries Beatrice. Lucretia wishes, "Would it were done!" and Beatrice catches the echo again when she declares to her mother that "What is done wisely, is done well." These are only a few examples, but they are sufficient to show the crushing influence of Shakespeare upon the poet. They show, too, that when an exciting *dramatic* scene has to be devised, the poet has not theatrical sense enough to invent unaided; he has to fall back on the past. *The Cenci* is perhaps the most beautiful thing given to us by the poetic dramatists, but it shares the same defects and weaknesses which are so patent in the other plays of the time.

Of the one dramatic effort of John Keats, *Otho*, written

along with Armitage Brown, hardly anything that is good may be said. In turning to the medieval period, Keats showed the impress of the usual romantic tendency. It is certainly true that the abstract "passion" or "theory" is not so marked in his play as it is in the works of many of his contemporaries—for Keats was less intellectually inclined than they—but both the plot and the delineation of character are weak. The tragedy gives us a regular villain in Conrad, a villainess in Auranthe; Ludolph is an injured hero, and Erminia a very much distressed heroine. In spite of the fact that the close is "tragic" (in the sense that it ends on death and misery) Keats' play is intimately connected with the regular melodramatic school. Nor does the language make amends for the poverty in other spheres. Hardly anything of the poet's magic appears in the dialogue, and many lines are of a harshness and crudity one might little have expected from the creator of *Isabella*.

Joining the other poets, Walter Savage Landor also essayed the dramatic style, but hardly with greater success. For *Count Julian* (1812) he turned to that half-mythical theme which had already inspired Rowley's *All's Lost by Lust* and Scott's *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811), and was to give, two years later, the *Roderick* (1814) of Southey. Perhaps the very horror of the story and its lack of subtlety appealed to these romantic poets. Landor's version compares, as a drama, but ill with Rowley's. No critic can claim that the earlier play is a masterpiece, but there is a certain luridness in the colouring which stamps its characters upon our mind. Landor's is hopelessly confused. Neither Julian nor the sensual Roderigo is granted a personality of force and distinction, while one who did not know of the legend beforehand would be disastrously lost amid Landor's dialogue. All that may be said in favour of *Count Julian* is that Landor, possessing a restraint denied to so many of his fellow writers, has been able in one or two scenes to strike out of the hardness of his imagination a power rarely seen in this age. As we read the play we come across passages which remind us of his more famous epigrams, and we can only regret that

such passages are lost amid the other scenes of this unequal play. The same confusion marks out the trilogy, *Andrea of Hungary*, *Giovanna of Naples* (both 1839) and *Fra Rupert* (1841), although a flash of greatness succeeds in illuminating the story of *The Siege of Ancona* (1846). Obviously, the stage was not to revive through Landor's efforts; his peculiar classicism, no more than the romanticism of his companions, failed to adapt itself to theatrical conventions.

Nor was his brother, Robert Eyre Landor, more successful. *The Count Arezzi* (1824) "was written designedly with those qualities which would render it unfit for representation" and as such is marred at the start. There is a certain ease in the dialogue here, but the story, like that of *Count Julian*, is somewhat confused, and the stabbing of Arezzi at the end seems to be purely fortuitous, a device to secure a tragic conclusion which the plot itself hardly justifies. In 1841 R. E. Landor published three other plays as *Tragedies—The Earl of Brecon*, a not uninteresting study of the conflicting claims of religion and of this earth, *Faith's Fraud*, a foolish story of the *Götz von Berlichingen* type, full of poison and medieval castles and villainy, and *The Ferryman; or The Translated Escutcheon*, an equally foolish tale of concealed identity, with impossible Counts of Altheim and vague Barons, and dark crimes and the Danube flowing by ready to receive the bodies. The claims of R. E. Landor to a place in the history of literature have been recently vindicated[1]; but as a dramatist he has no more merit than any of the others.

Once more, beside the major writers stood many who are now entirely forgotten, struggling, but struggling in vain, to gain success in the poetic sphere. Some, like J. Bird, openly declared that they would have liked to see their works on the stage; others took up the attitude of disdain. Bird's *Cosmo, Duke of Tuscany* (1822) follows the regular Byronic style, telling a dull story of the love of Giovanni, son of the usurping Duke, for Julia, and of his brother's villainy. Again we see an instance of how the poetic dramatists, when they did try

[1] See a volume of criticism and another of selections prepared by Eric Partridge (1927).

to introduce action, treated that action as something separate and apart from the dialogue. In the last scene Garcia, the villain, has set a convent in flames, and the stage direction, silent so far as dialogue goes, reminds us of the stage directions in the melodramas of the period:

JULIA *is seen above, enveloped in flame. A shriek of women is heard without. In a few moments,* GIOVANNI *is discovered, making his way through the flames. He catches* JULIA *in his arms, and bears her fainting on the stage. The curtain falls.*

It is as exciting as the heroic rescue in *Speed the Plough*, but what an ending for a poetic play which attempts to delineate character! The verb "attempts" is necessary here, for Bird's dialogue is much less exciting than his stage directions, and the reader is rather inclined to echo the words of a Soldier in the middle of act I:

Good night, old man!—good night!—you weary us.

Charles Bucke's *The Italians; or The Fatal Accusation* (1819) contains, like Bird's play, a long preface loudly complaining of the hardheartedness of theatrical managers. The story of *The Italians* is also one of villainy and virtue, mingled with political aspirations and a dash of horror. The loyal Fontano's eyes, like those of Gloucester, are put out, and this character wanders about the play, accompanied by a faithful Edgar, named Scipio. There is no subtlety in the delineation either of Manfredi, the villain, or of Alfonso, the Duke misled by him; and a turgid bombastic style dominates every scene. Turgid diction, too, mars Thomas Aird's *Murtzoufle* (1826), a play of Doge theme obviously influenced by Byron. How the author ever imagined that *Murtzoufle* could ever be accepted as the title of a successful tragedy only the gods can tell. Romantic folly is here summarised in one word. Byronic influence appears also in the peculiar *Duke of Mantua*, published in 1823, with a dedication to Lady Byron and bearing a frontispiece showing a figure obviously intended to be that of Byron half concealed behind a mask. In recent years it has been generally

credited to John Roby[1]. This fairly poor blank verse tragedy tells of the love of a Duke for Hermione and of the love-turned-to-hatred borne by Carlos. Ruin comes to all in the end. The dialogue, broken by a number of extraordinarily long soliloquies, is stilted, and the Shakespearian prose servant scenes[2] indicate well the evil influence of the Elizabethans.

A year before the appearance of *The Duke of Mantua*, Thomas Lovell Beddoes—like Lamb full of dark thoughts culled from Jacobean drama—issued *The Bride's Tragedy*. It is peculiar that this author, whose work breathes the very spirit of Webster and Tourneur, should have been he who gave the best advice to his age—advice unhappily never followed—concerning dramatic necessity. "I am convinced," he declared in 1825 to a friend[3],

> the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow—no creeper into worm-holes—no reviser even—however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold—Such ghosts as Marloe—Webster &c. are better dramatists, better poets, I dare say, than any contemporary of ours—but they are ghosts—the worm is in their pages—& we want to see something that our great-grandsires did not know. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama I still think, that we had better beget than revive—attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy & spirit of its own & only raise a ghost to gaze on not to live with—just now the drama is a haunted ruin.

That is genuinely inspired, thorough and profound theatrical criticism; yet all that Beddoes produced was *The Bride's Tragedy*, an immature drama redolent of the Elizabethans, and *Death's Jest Book or The Fool's Tragedy* (finished in its first form 1826; published 1850)[4], in which, more than half in love with easeful death, he brought back to life the gloomy

[1] See S. C. Chew, *Byron in England* (1924), p. 176. The play was reprinted in Roby's *Legendary and Poetical Remains* in 1854.

[2] Particularly I. ii.

[3] *The Complete Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes* (Fanfrolico Press, 1929), i. 25.

[4] There are also two fragments of plays, *The Second Brother* and *Torrismond*.

and macabre conceptions of the early seventeenth century stage.

> As sudden thunder
> Pierces night;
> As magic wonder,
> Wild affright,
> Rives asunder
> Men's delight:
> Our ghost, our corpse; and we
> Rise to be...
>
> As wake the morning
> Trumpets bright;
> As snowdrop, scorning
> Winter's might,
> Rises warning
> Like a spright:
> We buried, dead, and slain
> Rise again[1].

The "Voices in the air" who sing this ditty might be those of Tourneur and Marston and Webster and Ford. Beddoes has an independent style of his own; for he is a true poet: but neither of these plays is great as a play, because both are wanting in that constructive power and in that delineation of character which will always accompany a determined and inspired attempt to give to contemporary drama "an idiosyncrasy and spirit of its own." They are remembered today only for a few individual passages and for the lovely lyrics which Beddoes, like so many other poets of the time, knew so well how to write.

In Elizabethan style, too, Charles Jeremiah Wells treated his biblical story in *Joseph and his Brethren* (1824; but revised frequently up to 1879). Absolutely untheatrical, *Joseph and his Brethren* yet attracts the modern reader as it attracted Swinburne fifty years ago because of the high-sounding Marlowesque verse, because of the verve and the vision shot through every scene, because of the commanding figure of the lustful queen, Phraxanor. Praise, however, as we may certain qualities of Wells' drama, we yet come back

[1] *Op. cit.* i. 215.

to Beddoes' declaration. *Joseph and his Brethren* may have been a model for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but it could never be a model for the stage. Its language and its characterisation alike are poetic rather than dramatic.

Among plays which have been singled out for praise by contemporary or later critics Martin Archer Shee's *Alasco* (1824) has a special interest because of the 56 page preface addressed to the Lord Chamberlain. One may, of course, thoroughly sympathise with the outraged feelings of the author, and wholeheartedly endorse his attack on a petty-minded censor. There is absolutely nothing in *Alasco* which deserved the veto which was put upon its performance. As at least one play in our own times has shown, however, the fact that a drama has been unrighteously banned does not by any means indicate that the work is one of prime dramatic worth, although in Shee's wail of indignation there is really an implication that he has suffered martyrdom as much for excellence in plot-construction as for somewhat liberal sentiments. This being so, it may be well to glance at least at the main development and treatment of his theme. And first we may start with a prefatory note which he himself prefixes to the text. "The reader is requested to observe," he comments, that

> the passages distinguished by inverted commas were omitted by me, in the copy for the Theatre, in order to reduce the Play within the necessary acting limits;—*having taken the Tragedies of Shakespeare, in Johnson and Steevens's edition, as my guide, in judging of the length to which I should extend my composition; and not being aware how much they were curtailed for the stage, I was led into the error of writing nearly one thousand lines more than could be admitted within the usual limits of an acting play*[1].

The italics, of course, are my own, designed to call attention to that first and last and never-to-be-forgiven sin of the would-be dramatist—mere study appreciation of past efforts and disdain of the "acting play." Archer Shee is condemned, not because he was banned by the Censor, but, on his own count, because he had not the first requisites of a playwright.

[1] Advertisement, p. lvii.

Having read cool statement in the preface, one is not surprised to find dull realisation in the body of the play. The play opens with a daybreak scene, by a dim cavern, men standing on guard and others entering with their leaders, Conrad and Malinski. Thus they speak:

CONRAD (*speaking to one of the Peasants*).
Call in the scouts—
By Heaven, the moon's a prodigal to-night,
And showers her silver lavishly.

MALINSKI.
'Tis the dawn
That breaks above the hill.

CONRAD.
Why, what's the hour?

MALINSKI.
Four, by the Abbey clock.

CONRAD.
Then we again
Have loiter'd at our sport.—But who comes here,
Outstripping haste? [*Enter a scout, hastily.*
Why, comrade, if thy news
Should wear but half the importance of thy face,
We must have a gazette for it. If thou'st breath,
Proclaim.

The needless oaths, the florid references to natural phenomena, the stilted and would-be poetic language are scattered throughout the entirety of the play, rising to a frenzy of bombast when, at the end, Alasco, his Amantha dead, breaks away from the hold of Conrad and raises his dagger on high:

As you regard your lives, molest me not!—
For I'm a desperate man, that frenzy grapples with.
Think you, the dagger and the bowl removed,
With every mortal means the wretch resorts to[1],
That you can prison life in this frail mansion!

[1] It may be noted how these poetic dramatists, besides copying situations and direct phrases in Shakespeare's plays, echoed even the formation of Shakespearian sentences, as if in them lay the secret of dramatic virtue. Hamlet's "The thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to" obviously is the model for Archer Shee's line above.

Oh! no—no, no!—the soul eludes all jailers!
Tyrants may frown—the bullying world look big—
And scowl down feebler spirits;—who dares to die,
Scoffs at the vain grimace, and sets him free!—
There is a point, at which the heart will break,—
And I have reached it!—yes—this friendly steel
But saves some useless pangs.—Had she—there cold—
Had she remained to bless me—for her sake,
I might have lived—and writhed through some sad years,
A pardoned slave!—in shackles, with my country.
But now!—
Life's load were insupportable to sense.—
Thus then, I shake the loathsome burthen off,
And fly to my Amantha!—

No; the drama could receive nothing of value, nothing of strength, from such as Martin Archer Shee.

There is no need here to continue further. One might occupy space with praise of the poetic beauty which appears in scene after scene of the *Cosmo de Medici* of Richard Hengist Horne and in those of John Westland Marston's *The Patrician's Daughter*; one might continue to quote from the follies of the period—but, in reality, such additional space devoted to the subject would not contribute more than we already know of the chief qualities of this dramatic or non-dramatic school. For, in spite of all their differences, in spite of that intense individualism fostered by lyric ideals, these men did form a school which had two things in common —a vague desire to shine in the sphere of dramatic authorship and a childish inability to take advantage of what was offered to them by the theatre itself. As we have already seen, extenuating circumstances may be brought forward in their defence, but always our researches into the causes of dramatic decline lead us back ultimately to the failure of the poets themselves, to their essential blindness regarding the facts. They could not see that true drama must always be a popular thing dependent upon the contemporary theatre; they could not see that what the age craved for was not resuscitations of past effort but something new, something that should be expressive of a changed and changing civilisation. Lord

Byron, in the pride of his intellect, may vent his spleen on the stage of his day and pompously enquire,

> Shall sapient managers new scenes produce
> From CHERRY, SKEFFINGTON, and Mother Goose?
> While SHAKESPEARE, OTWAY, MASSINGER, forgot,
> On stalls must moulder, or in closets rot?[1]

But, after all, it might have been better for the drama had Shakespeare, Otway and Massinger been forgotten or at least left out of the sphere of original creation. There were only a few men of the age who saw the real truth of things and even they failed to carry their precepts into action, even they confused the issue by paying humble obeisance to the poets. Because of their interest the opinions of Richard Hengist Horne may be taken as a conclusion to this section. Horne was wiser than most. He saw that the use of the word "legitimate" was doing evil, and realised that

> the most legitimate, because the genuine offspring of the age, is that drama which catches the manners as they rise, and embodies the characteristics of the time.

This, he found, had "taken shelter at what have been named 'Minor Theatres'," and was expressed

> in the skilful little comedies, and bright, racy dramas of Jerrold, Planché, Bernard, Buckstone, Oxenford, Dance, Mark Lemon, Moncrieff, Coyne, Leman Rede, Lunn, Peake, Poole, and others. ...They have, each and all (though in very different quantities), lavished much wit, fancy, and invention on their productions, doomed by the theatrical destinies to an ephemeral existence[2].

This reads like sound criticism, and the impression is strengthened when Horne stretches out the finger of contempt at those who have disdainfully criticised the efforts of the "illegitimate" writers. Unfortunately, however, the argument soon moves back to familiar lines. These authors of the Minor Theatres are doing as Shakespeare did, but the public has changed. No longer are there audiences of "inquiring and earnest-minded men"; the modern theatre-goers crave for lesser things. Praise may be given to a few individual

[1] *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers* (3rd edn., 1810), p. 46.
[2] *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844; World's Classics, 1907), p. 307.

playwrights, but poverty is behind. And what is the result? The "unacted drama." And who then are these unacted dramatists? Horne's answer is, "Nearly all the best authors," and he proceeds to show that

> there is manifestly the strongest tendency in the present age to be dramatic, but its chief authors have no means of learning the art. To go no further back than Byron, Southey, Shelley, Coleridge, the list includes almost every author eminent in works of imagination and invention. With those just mentioned we should class—because his genius ranks among them—the honoured name of Barry Cornwall, who having had a tragedy successfully produced upon the stage as long ago as 1821, has manifestly never felt it worth while to tempt again the countless troubles and unworthy annoyances attending representation[1].

In this passage, Horne has not only brought back the argument to the familiar lines, he has provided his own refutation. The poets have not the opportunity to learn the art, he thinks; and then proceeds to cite Barry Cornwall. Did Byron have no opportunities? Was not Browning asked to write for the stage by Macready himself? Did not Coleridge and Talfourd and a host of others get their pieces put upon the boards? And if these are not opportunities, what other opportunities has the stage to offer?

The truth is that the poets were lordly inclined. They would not "tempt the countless troubles and unworthy annoyances attending representation." They would not recognise that Literature is not the only thing in the theatre; that there are actors to interpret and an audience to applaud or to condemn. Their passion for the theatre, on which Horne comments, was not a passion for the theatre but a passion for themselves.

II. *Comedies*

The "unacted drama" was, of course, mainly serious in style, specialising, as we have seen, in bombastic tragic sentiment, but a further word may be said of the few comedies which the poets and novelists produced in this age. The fatal

[1] *A New Spirit of the Age*, pp. 313–4.

weakness of the period is the lack of a sense of humour, and, when this has been said, it will be at once realised that the "legitimate" comedies of the time form but a miserable and sorry show. Literature, in aristocratic wise, sneered at the pun and the witticism, but failed to give anything to take their places. The comic scenes of the "minor" plays may be feeble enough, but at least they possessed interest of action and good rough and tumble fun. There is little in the ordinary "unacted" sphere but elephantine merriment and dismal attempts at forced humour.

Comedy took equal share with tragedy in Joanna Baillie's scheme of passionate drama; her original plan was to devote one play of each kind to every passion she selected for treatment. A trifle of tragic power she possessed; of genius for comedy she had none. Only one of her many experiments in this sphere found its way to the stage—that being *The Election* (E.O.H. June 1817), a companion comedy for *De Monfort* (D.L. 1800). The subject is Hate with a capital H. We are presented to two main characters, Baltimore, an impoverished squire, and Freeman, a rich upstart. The former detests the latter heartily enough, and Mrs Freeman devotes her enmity to Baltimore. Mrs Baltimore and Freeman are, on the other hand, generously inclined; indeed Freeman actually saves Baltimore from ruin and is insulted for his pains. A duel is about to take place when it is discovered that the pair are really brothers. Sentiment colours the whole of the dialogue, and of comic force there is not, in the whole five acts, the slightest glimmer of a sparkle. There is no need here to analyse all, or even many, of Joanna Baillie's efforts in this style. Every one is stilted. Not a laugh rises from a single scene. One further example will serve for all, *The Second Marriage*, which was printed in 1802. Here the chief character is Seabright, a man who has recently lost his wife and who, out of ambition, proceeds to woo and marry Lady Sarah. The troubles and vexations that arise from his passion of Ambition dully and sentimentally fill five acts. *Requiescat in pace.*

This section, devoted to unacted comedy, may well remain

as brief as possible, and two authors only may serve as representative of the rest. Maria Edgeworth essayed the same or a similar effort as that attempted by her literary sister, but once more sentimentalism ruled and comedy was forgotten, even although, as in *Love and Law* (1817), the authoress tried to introduce local Irish humours. In this play a *Romeo and Juliet* theme appears in the enmity of the McBrides and the Rooneys—Honor of the first house loving Randal of the other. The only scene that possesses any real worth is that in which the two factions appear before the Justice of the Peace, Mr Carver. Humours, too, appear in *The Rose, Thistle and Shamrock*, particularly with the persons of the drunken Christy Gallacher and Andrew Hope, the Scots drum-major, but the main theme, in which Mabel Larkin succeeds in capturing Gilbert in spite of Florinda Gallacher's flirtatious efforts, is as sentimental as the other. This sentimentalism reaches a nadir in *The Two Guardians*. St Albans, the hero, loves the artificial and heartless Juliana, daughter of Lady Courtington, whose husband is one of his guardians. Like the Tom Joneses of earlier days, he is a thoughtless but generous youth, and his eyes are opened to the evils of the world by his faithful negro servant, Quaco. The follies of fashionable life are attacked in each scene, and due prominence is given to the generous sentiments of "the noble savage." The play is dull, and, worse than that, it is old.

Joanna Baillie and Maria Edgeworth both show the preoccupation with sentimental "messages," and this preoccupation is that which did most to kill contemporary so-called comedy of the literary kind. Another type of weakness is indicated in *The Lamplighter* (first printed 1879), by Charles Dickens. One might have thought that Dickens, with his skill in drawing peculiar and amusing figures, would have been able to produce farce of a vivid, even if exaggerated nature. *The Lamplighter*, however, is incredibly dull, and happily for our purpose there exists for comparison with it Dickens' narrative treatment of the same theme, *The Lamplighter's Story*. The latter is not one of the novelist's

masterpieces, but it has a charm of its own and a direct appeal; the former has neither the one nor the other. This seems to show that even Dickens, whose heart was ever, from his earliest youth, with the theatre, could not find the true way of expressing himself in dramatic wise. When he is permitted that opening into personal revelation which is narrative, he can do great things; when he is tied down to dialogue alone, his strength fails him.

It were needless to seek further examples of the general debility usually masked in high-sounding terms which is to be discovered in almost every dramatic work produced by those authors whose fame rests mainly in their poetic or narrative achievements. Sufficient examination has been given to show that their efforts were in the main retrospective, that they never thought of producing anything which should be vitally connected with the spirit of their times and that consequently their efforts could make no true appeal, could lead towards no advance either in the sphere of dramatic craftsmanship or in that of dramatic ideas. As we have seen, while certain allowances may be made on account of the theatrical conditions, this inability to create something new was the result of a weakness in the literary authors themselves. They thought too much of their own virtues; they were dazzled by the light of Elizabethan achievements; they were loath to expend that time and toil which every great dramatist must devote to the mastering of his craft. They saw that melodramas, spectral, domestic and nautical, were popular on the boards of the stage, and they persisted in the writing of romantic Italian conspiracies; they saw that the contemporary audiences loved broad humour and boisterous fun, and they continued penning their dull "comedies" in which a laugh might seem as incongruous as in a cathedral. Instead of taking the theatric material which was given to them, they preferred to trudge along their own paths, thus indirectly dragging the stage lower and lower yet into the depth of despond.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

OUTWARDLY in 1850 the English theatre had reached almost its lowest ebb. The playhouses had been freed, but no startling dawn had sent its rays over the darkness of the dramatic horizon. It might well seem to contemporaries that the London playhouse could never recover, but would always remain a mere adjunct of the Parisian Comédie Française, even of the minor theatres of France. Its only real hope seemed to be Shakespeare; its orientation was still towards the Elizabethans and towards such men as Browning who were prepared to turn out poetic dramas.

From our twentieth century pinnacle, however, we can now see that the playhouses of London were but working out their destiny, and that the darkness of 1850 was illuminated by a light cast from the regions despised in those times. The poetic drama had been a natural form in the late sixteenth century; its essentially useful career was continued, so far as tragedy is concerned, up to the period of the Civil Wars. At the Restoration, quite naturally, the thoughts of the dramatists were turned to those models which had been produced in the decades immediately previous to their own times. A glimmering of Elizabethan emotionalism still stirred in the breasts of many, so that an Otway could yet create a passionate *Venice Preserv'd*, and a Lee, in moments of sanity, could emulate the richness of earlier times. This being so, the poetic drama had a perfect right to live. The heroic tragedy of the Restoration is a completely regular and just development of dramatic style. It presents the adaptation of the earlier model to the requirements and conditions of a changing generation, and the very fact that it was thus adapted indicates in itself the individual force and inventiveness of the Restoration stage. That inventiveness showed

itself also in the sphere of comedy. Shadwell might continue to produce Jonsonian pieces, but the particular style of comic achievement which has come to be associated in the minds of most with the reign of Charles II is unquestionably a new style, born of the desire to express faithfully the ideals of the age and the result of much experimentation before perfection is reached in the comedies of Congreve.

During the eighteenth century conditions changed once more. The free and reckless audience of Caroline courtiers made way for the less aristocratic spectators of Georgian eras. Reformation of manners (outward at least) was in the air and a new type of drama was demanded. It is precisely here that we begin to trace signs of debility. The dramatic authors ought to have created a new tragic form for the new ideals, and just for a moment it seemed as if one man were to succeed in doing this. Rightly George Lillo produced a prose tragedy with themes taken from life, providing a form of expression which obviously made its contemporary appeal. Lillo is not a great artist, but, because of his inventiveness, he deserves to be counted among those English dramatists who belong to the Shakespearian line. Unfortunately, however, the dead hand had its grip upon his companions. Memories of the poetic dramas, increased by a growing enthusiasm (not always genuine) for Shakespeare, met with pseudo-classic sentiment. Few dared to follow Lillo's lead, and dull *Irenes* and duller *Abdallas* ruled predominant. In comedy, because of the escape into prose, greater vitality persisted. The eighteenth century may have forgotten how to be thrilled, but, in spite of its lachrymose men of feeling, it never quite forgot how to laugh. The line of development from Vanbrugh and Farquhar, through Gay and Fielding, on to Colman and Sheridan and Goldsmith, is fundamentally unbroken.

The nineteenth century opened with the growing love of melodrama, and this melodrama was at once the cause of dramatic decline and the expression of vital forces yet working in the theatre. In one respect, it was the unashamed demand of dramatists and spectators for thrill and action on the stage.

It was the reply of the romantics to the passionless rhetoric of *Irene*. In so far, the melodrama was a force for the good. Romanticism, however, had already called forth a group of highly philosophic poets with exceedingly lofty ideals, and the melodrama, to them, seemed naught but primitive buffoonery. These poets recognised Shakespeare as a master, and soon they were discovering Shakespeare's companions and followers, Marlowe and Massinger and Ford. Condemning the melodrama, they sought to provide a legitimate tragic drama of their own by copying the Elizabethans in style, by throwing in gratuitously a good deal of their philosophic conceptions, and by borrowing a few themes and characters from the fashionable German dramatists of the day. As has already been seen, they never escaped from these toils. From Baillie to Browning, from Wordsworth to Tennyson, the dead hand of the older poetic drama was upon them. This meant that only those authors who made no claim to the fame of authorship dared to write plays which might be popular, and as a consequence the purely literary form of drama inevitably declined. Subsidiary causes—such as the necessity of rapid production—took away even that simple polish which a Fitzball might have desired in leisure to give to his melodramas.

That, however, the melodrama possessed a monopoly of dramatic inventiveness, that through it has passed down the vital force from Elizabethan days, is proved, not only by its initial popularity, but by the fact that it constantly adapted itself to meet the needs of the time. When it started, about the year 1800, it was romantically adventurous, and introduced those elements of the supernatural which were calculated to thrill an audience which had grown once more passionate. No one could hiss a villain or cheer a hero in *Irene*; the melodrama is made to stir the galleries. After its career in the realm of spirits and romantic enthusiasm, the melodrama became domestic, and for the first time since the appearance of *The London Merchant* in 1730 there seemed to be an awakening to the need of a new type of drama. Most of the domestic pieces produced between 1830 and 1850 are

crude in the extreme, but they not only suited the demands of the age, they pointed forward towards that type of domestic play which has provided the most characteristic medium of modern theatrical expression. Had it not been for the domestic dramas of 1830–50, Tom Robertson could not have produced his class plays of the sixties, and, had it not been for Tom Robertson, Ibsen could not have been accepted so soon or so enthusiastically in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It may be said, indeed, concerning the whole line of tradition, that such a play as *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, through its inventive power and endeavour to express the ideas of the time, is no unworthy successor of *Othello*; that in *The London Merchant* another endeavour is made to recreate this type of drama adumbrated by Heywood; that in the early nineteenth century a *Luke the Labourer* carries on the tradition thus established, not merely imitatively but with creative purpose; that *Caste* is a refinement upon the earlier efforts; and that Galsworthy's *Strife* or Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* are but the latest adaptations of this ideal to the requirements of the twentieth century. It is the varying of the method of expression to suit the demands of the period which proves the vital power in all the dramas mentioned here. In spite of the different spirits of classicism or romanticism, *Irene*, *Douglas*, *Abdalla*, *The Borderers*, *Remorse*, *Cenci*, *Strafford*, *Becket*, *Paolo and Francesca*—and countless others—are the same; removed from the life of their day, wilfully ignorant of the demands of contemporaries, each of these is imitative in essence, not of life, but of past literary models.

Nor is this inventive power confined to the region of melodrama in the nineteenth century minor theatre. Higher comedy always demands either the great author or the great intellectual actor. The great authors kept away from the stage, and the actors of the period seem to have lacked that quality which once made Tristano Martinelli and Tiberio Fiorilli the joyous companions of kings. As a result the comedy of Colman and Sheridan descended to farce. Action came to play a greater part in the conjuring up of laughter than did

spoken dialogue. Yet even here inventiveness appeared. Already attention has been drawn to the varied nomenclature used for the lighter productions of the minor stage[1], and that varied nomenclature shows in its own way how eagerly the dramatists were experimenting in an endeavour to find those styles best suited to the age. It may be that we shall judge harshly the intrinsic merits of these works, as the late William Archer judged Boucicault, but between 1840 and 1850 at least we see traces of a renascence of pure wit, in the extravaganzas we see the beginnings of Savoy opera, in the burlesques we see a spirit of fun which has played its part in the formation of modern comedy. Like the authors of the melodramas, the authors of the farces and extravangazas were pioneer workers, changing their modes in accordance with the temper of the decades.

Here again the dead hand laid its spell over the literary dramas with results even more apparent than in the sphere of serious plays. The eighteenth century, for all practical purposes, had forgotten Shakespeare's romantic comedy, but *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* were rediscovered in the romantic period, with disastrous effects, for these plays led some writers to a style of blank verse play, called by the authors themselves "comedy," in which an endeavour was made to imitate Shakespeare. Tobin's efforts in this way are not to be despised, but any one of a score of farces of the period is to be preferred to his efforts. The farces are at least alive, and young; poor Tobin's plays are either senile or lifeless. Writers of wit could have given much to the contemporary theatre, but, with the exception of Lamb—and even he succumbed to the literary spirit of the times—the "comedies" of a would-be-higher sort published during these fifty years are lamentably lacking in any sparkle of merriment. That which the authors forgot was that romantic humour is a thing which must be spontaneous and that it includes within itself a true element of the ridiculous. They found much of *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* serious, and as a consequence they forgot that Shakespeare's genius could

[1] See *supra*, pp. 133–4.

express itself with equal propriety and success through the medium of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

It is not too much to say that, if the nineteenth century drama is weak, its weakness is due to Shakespeare. It was the very greatness of Shakespeare and of the other Elizabethans that dimmed the eyes of the critics and of the creative writers to the necessity of looking, not to the past, but to the present and to the future. It was the Shakespearian poetic play which provided the greatest hindrance to the development of prose drama in the age. The romantic poets thought that they could become a set of second Shakespeares; yet, if they only could have known it, the true representatives of the Elizabethan in the nineteenth century, and those whom, we feel, Shakespeare himself would have welcomed, were the writers of the melodrama and the farce. Shakespeare might have been a little out of his ease in the company of a serious Wordsworth and a metaphysical Coleridge; he could have spent many hours with a witty Planché and a cheery Fitzball.

APPENDIX A

THE THEATRES, 1800–1850

I. *London and Environs*

In this list I have included all the theatres and houses of entertainment known to me between the opening and the middle of the century. This account, of course, could have been extended to great length by the enumeration of managers and the occupancy of actors, but such detail appeared not to have importance enough for inclusion here. I have restricted myself, therefore, to the outstanding facts, which I have endeavoured to make as accurate as possible. It will be observed that change of name was common in this period, and I have thought it best to tabulate the theatres separately under their various titles rather than group these titles under a single heading. Full cross-references indicate the history of any single building during the half-century.

Almost all these theatres are new. In 1800 only nine theatres were in regular use: *Drury Lane*, *Covent Garden*, the *Opera House* in the *Haymarket*, the *Theatre Royal*, *Haymarket*, *Sadler's Wells*, the *Royal Amphitheatre*, the *Royal Circus*, the *Royalty* and the *Sans Souci*. Of these, practically all were rebuilt during this era, and, as will be realised, many fresh playhouses rose in rivalry to them in many districts of London.

The Academic Theatre (Leicester-place, Leicester-square). Under this name the *Sans Souci* was opened in 1806 as a Dramatic Academy[1].

The Adelphi (Strand) [Adel.]. As the *Adelphi*, the old *Sans Pareil* was opened on Saturday, Oct. 23, 1819. This theatre was one of the best of the minors, F. H. Yates, Daniel Terry, the Mathews, B. N. Webster and Madame Celeste being among its most famous managers. It was rebuilt in 1858. Noted for weird and wonderful melodrama, it favoured the introduction of strange "effects" and of animal performers. Towards the close of the period it was also becoming famous for its burlesques.

The Albert Saloon, or *Royal Albert Saloon* (Shepherdess-walk, Britannia Fields, Hoxton). This house of entertainment seems to have been opened in 1844. In its most flourishing days it was owned by H. Brading. A remarkable feature in it was the two

[1] See *The News* for March 16, 1806.

stages built at right angles to one another, one opening into a closed theatre, the other in front of an open-air auditorium.

The Albion Theatre (Windmill-street, Haymarket). Not much is known of this house. It was opened about 1832 and renamed the following year as the *New Queen's*. Its short life was ended in 1836.

The Aquatic Theatre. See *Sadler's Wells*.

The Argyll Theatre or *Argyll Rooms* (Argyll-street, Regent-street). French plays were given here by subscription between 1819 and 1823. See *The New Private Saloon Theatre*.

Astley's Pavilion. See *The Olympic Theatre*.

Astley's Theatre. See *The Royal Amphitheatre*.

The Bower Saloon (Stangate-street, Lambeth). This house of variety entertainment was opened in 1837 by Phillips. It later became the *Royal Stangate Theatre*, which was closed in 1878.

The Britannia Theatre or *Saloon* (High-street, Hoxton). Presenting the usual mixed fare of "illegitimate" drama, the *Britannia*, managed by Lane from 1841 to 1849, was directed for fifty years (1849–99) by his widow, Mrs Sarah Lane.

The Brunswick Theatre. See *The New Royal Brunswick Theatre*.

The City Theatre. See *The New City Theatre*.

The City of London Theatre. See *The Royal City of London Theatre*.

The Clarence Theatre. See *The Royal Clarence Theatre*.

The Coburg Theatre. See *The Royal Coburg Theatre*.

The Colosseum Theatre (Albany-street, Regent's Park) [Col.]. This house was opened for minor shows and variety entertainments on Wednesday, July 12, 1837.

Covent Garden, Theatre Royal [C.G.]. As rebuilt in 1792[1], Covent Garden stood unaltered until it was burned to the ground on Sept. 20, 1808. The century opened with a bitter dispute between the management and the actors (season 1799–1800)[2]. In 1803 Kemble purchased a share in the theatre and took part in its direction. On the destruction of their house the actors, in 1808, moved to the *Opera House* in the *Haymarket*. The foundation stone of a new structure, designed by Robert Smirke, was laid on Dec. 12, 1808, and this new *Covent Garden* was completed by September 18 of the following year. The old building, which had an ovoid auditorium, held 3013 persons[3]; the new building, in

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 229.

[2] See *A Statement of the Differences subsisting between the Proprietors and Performers of the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden* (1800).

[3] Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror* (1808), i. 135–8. The pit held 632, the boxes 1200, the first gallery 820 and the upper gallery 361.

point of capacity, seems to have been a trifle smaller, but its stage for accommodation and excellence of machinery was considered "superior to that of any theatre in Europe[1]." On its opening, the attempt of the managers to raise the prices led to the notorious O.P. riots[2]. In 1823 Charles Kemble assumed full control; under his management and with the assistance of Edmund Kean (1827–33) there was presented here a series of elaborate Shakespeare productions. Alfred Bunn in October 1833 took over the management of the two patent theatres; in October 1835 a new lessee, Osbaldistone, tried the experiment of reducing prices—but without success; the Macready management lasted from 1837 to 1839; that of Vestris and Mathews from 1839 to 1842. The next years saw the gradual encroachment of musical shows, and on Tuesday, April 6, 1847, the theatre was formally opened as *The Royal Italian Opera House*. This was burned in 1856; the present *Covent Garden Opera House* was opened two years later.

The Dominion of Fancy Theatre (Strand, "between Southampton-street and Exeter 'Change"). This was opened on Friday, March 1, 1816, for the exhibition of "pieces of mechanism, ombres, chinois, etc."

Drury Lane, Theatre Royal [D.L.]. The latest Drury Lane house had been built by Holland in 1794[3]. For the seasons 1800–1 and 1801–2 Kemble was in command. On his withdrawal, the theatre sank steadily in dignity and worth; Feb. 24, 1809, saw its complete destruction by fire. During the period from October 1809 to May 1812, the Theatre Royal company acted at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket (March–May 1809) and at the Lyceum. £400,000 was subscribed for a new building, the foundation-stone of which was laid on Oct. 29, 1811, and which was formally opened on October 10 of the following year. It was slightly smaller than the 1794 structure, but still too large for the production of intimate plays. When Elliston was manager, the interior was reconstructed under Beazley's direction; this, with minor alterations, remains to the present day. At first managed by Arnold and others, in 1814 it was taken over by a committee which included Lord Byron. Edmund Kean aided in keeping the house from bankruptcy. In 1818 Stephen Kemble became manager and prices were lowered from 5*s.* and 3*s.* to 3*s.* and 2*s.* The following year the theatre was leased to R. W. Elliston, who, however, was forced to abandon it in 1823. Kean, Macready and Liston were then its most noted actors. Various other lessees

[1] *Covent-Garden Journal*, i. 61.
[2] See *supra*, pp. 9–10.
[3] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 229.

were secured, but all ended in failure. The notorious Alfred Bunn management of the two patent theatres dates from October 1833 to 1839. In 1841 Macready assumed control, but was compelled to retire in 1843, when Bunn once more took over the management, with no more successful results.

Ducrow's New National Arena (Church-street, Whitechapel). This house was opened on Monday, Jan. 27, 1834, but I know nothing more of its history.

The Eagle Saloon, also called *The Grecian Saloon* and *The Olympic Saloon* (Shepherdess-walk, Britannia Fields, Hoxton). Built by Thomas Rose about 1838, as the *Grecian*, this entertainment theatre began to present "illegitimate" dramas regularly from 1843. It was taken over by Benjamin Conquest in 1851 and rebuilt by him in 1877; now it is used by the Salvation Army. Evidently one of the most famous of the variety houses, its name is immortalised in the still-remembered song, "Pop goes the weasel."

The East London Theatre (Wellclose-square, E.) [E.L.]. Under the name of the *East London*, the *Royalty* was opened in August 1816, with considerable renovations. It had not a very distinguished career, and, after being extensively altered in 1819 (opening Wednesday, Nov. 3), was burned down in 1826. On its site was erected *The Royal Brunswick Theatre*.

The Effingham Saloon (Whitechapel). This saloon theatre was opened in 1843 and rebuilt in 1867. It was burned in 1870, re-erected and again destroyed by fire.

The English Opera House. See *The Lyceum Theatre*.

The Fitzroy Theatre. See *The Royal Fitzroy Theatre*.

Garrick's Subscription Theatre (Leman-street, Goodman's Fields). The *Garrick* had been erected on the site of the old *Goodman's Fields Theatre*, and was opened on Monday, Jan. 3, 1831. It was burned in 1846 and rebuilt by B. O. Conquest. In 1859 it was used as a music-hall.

The German Theatre (Leicester-place, Leicester-square) [German]. This is but a new name for the *Sans Souci*, used for the performance of German dramas by "Schirmer's Children" during the season 1805–6. It opened under the new title on Wednesday, July 17, 1805.

The Globe Theatre or *Rotunda* (Blackfriars-road). This was opened as a theatre in 1833; by 1838, however, it had been turned into a concert hall.

The Grecian Saloon. See *The Eagle Saloon*.

Haymarket, King's Theatre or *Opera House* [H.[1]]. A new King's Theatre had been built in 1790[1], and this, about 1801, was

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 230.

remodelled by Marinari. The stage was very large, 60 feet deep, 80 feet broad and 46 feet from box to box. Apparently at this theatre "persons could walk from the pit or boxes behind the scenes during the performance[1]." In 1809 it was used by the homeless patent companies. A reconstruction was undertaken in 1818; in 1867 a fire destroyed the building; and a new Opera House was erected in 1871–2. This was later known as *Her Majesty's* and was pulled down in 1892.

Haymarket, Theatre Royal [H.[2]]. The original "Little Theatre[2]" as built by Foote in 1766, was managed till 1820 by George Colman the Younger, under whose direction it had a highly successful career, specialising in farces and lighter pieces. On Colman's retiral, a new building was opened (on Wednesday, July 4, 1821) by Morris, near the old site. In 1837 B. N. Webster assumed the management. Here Samuel Phelps and Madame Celeste first appeared in London, while from 1839 to 1841 Macready and Helen Faucit acted as "stars." Webster retired from the management in 1853.

Little Drury Lane. On Monday, April 19, 1813, an announcement was made by the managers of the *Olympic Pavilion* that their theatre would open under this name. The patentees objected and the title was abandoned.

The Lyceum (Strand) [Lyc.]. Often described as the *Large Theatre, Lyceum*, this building had originally been erected in 1765 as an exhibition room for artists, but by 1790 it was being used for variety entertainments by Charles Dibdin. In 1794 it was rebuilt, and when the century opened it was presenting such attractions as "Musical Glasses," "Phantasmagoria" and battle pictures, with, it is interesting to note, illumination by gas. The first theatrical show I have been able to trace here appears in 1807. In 1809 S. J. Arnold received a licence to open it for musical plays, which he did on Friday, April 21, 1809. From 1809 to 1812 it housed the Drury Lane company and then once more returned to musical drama. On Saturday, June 15, 1816, still under Arnold's direction, it was formally opened as *The English Opera House* [E.O.H.], after almost complete rebuilding. This was burned down in 1830, when Arnold's company acted in various theatres, chiefly the *Adelphi.* The present *Lyceum*, as designed by Beazley, was opened on Monday, July 14, 1834, for "the representation of English operas and the encouragement of indigenous musical talent[3]." From 1844 to 1847 it was managed by Robert and Mary Keeley; in 1847

[1] Gilliland, *op. cit.* i. 167.

[2] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 229.

[3] The present building was actually reconstructed about 1904.

Vestris and Mathews took it over, the latter retiring in 1855. In the bills, both *Lyceum* and *English Opera House* are used to describe this building.

The Marylebone Theatre (Church-street, Edgware-road) [M'bone]. Under this name the *New Royal Sussex Theatre* (or *Royal Pavilion, West*) opened, it is said, in 1837; I have been unable to discover an earlier record than 1844.

The Minor Theatre (Catherine-street, Strand). In 1829 the *Theatre of Variety* seems to have assumed this name. Here stage-struck youths were encouraged to pay for the privilege of appearing in dramatic rôles.

Miss Kelly's Theatre and Dramatic School (73 Dean-street, Soho-square) [Kelly's]. Under the patronage of the Duke of Devonshire, and fortified with a "minor" licence, Miss Kelly opened this (the first of the personally-named theatres) on Monday, May 25, 1840. It was used by her for the presentation of plays for a few years; after 1850 it became *The Soho* and *The Royalty*.

The New Theatre (Tottenham-street, Tottenham-court-road) [New]. This house, "the decorations designed and executed by Mr Greenwood" and "licensed by Act of Parliament," was opened on the site of *The New Royal Riding School* on Monday, April 23, 1810. The following season it was renamed *The Regency*.

The New City Theatre (Milton-street, Fore-street, Cripplegate) [City]. *The New City Theatre* was opened by John Kemble Chapman on Monday, April 4, 1831, and ran till 1836, when it was demolished. It was among the more respectable of the "minors," and welcomed such performers as Kean, Mrs Stirling and Webster to its boards. For a time, from November 1833, Moncrieff was its manager. An effort was made here to create a Dramatic Academy, and for one season at least the house was run in conjunction with *The Royal Coburg*.

The New Private Saloon Theatre, Argyle-street. The building was opened in July 1807, and a few old plays were performed occasionally. As the *Argyll Rooms*, it later (1819–23) witnessed the production of some French dramas.

The New Queen's Theatre. See *The Albion Theatre.*

The New Royal Brunswick Theatre (Goodman's Fields). After the burning of *The East London Theatre* in April 1826, a new theatre was erected and opened on Monday, Feb. 25, 1828, as the *Brunswick*. The following Thursday, during rehearsal, the entire fabric collapsed.

[1] *The Dramatic Magazine* (1829), pp. 173–4.

The New Royal Riding School, late His Majesty's Ancient Concert Rooms, Tottenham-street. I find a pantomime presented here in 1808. On the site of this building rose *The New* (later *The Regency*) *Theatre.*

The New Royal Sussex Theatre (Church-street, Edgware-road). This was apparently opened in 1832, and was later renamed as *The Royal Pavilion, West,* and the *Marylebone.*

The New Royal West London Theatre (Tottenham-street) [W.L.]. After considerable "improvements" *The Regency* (formerly *The New*) opened under this name on Tuesday, Dec. 26, 1820. In 1822 it was described[1] as "the smallest of these places devoted to the drama; and being of too humble pretensions to create jealousy, is permitted to play tragedy, comedy, or farce, in as legitimate a manner as the company is capable of doing." Later it became the *Tottenham-street Theatre* and *The Queen's Theatre.*

The New Standard Theatre. See *The Royal Standard Theatre.*

The New Strand Theatre. See *The Strand Theatre.*

The Olympic Theatre (Wych-street, or Newcastle-street, Strand) [Olym.]. As the *Olympic Pavilion* [Pav.] or *Olympic Saloon,* this house was opened by Philip Astley on Monday, Dec. 1, 1806. In 1807 it was called *Astley's New Olympic Pavilion* and in 1808 *Astley's Pavilion.* Thereafter, it was usually named *The Pavilion,* until it was taken over by Elliston in 1814, who, after failing to open it as *Little Drury Lane* (q.v.), styled it *The Olympic.* The opening day was Tuesday, Feb. 8, 1814. Rebuilt in 1818, it was, from 1819 to 1831, managed by a variety of directors, including Oxberry and Vining. At this time it specialised in melodrama. In 1831 Madame Vestris took control and, with her extravaganzas and light entertainments, made it one of the most refined theatres in London. In 1839 Vestris and Mathews moved to *Covent Garden,* leaving *The Olympic* to Samuel Butler, who in 1841 abandoned it to George Wild. In 1846 Miss Kate Howard and in 1847 Davidson undertook the direction. The theatre was burned to the ground in March 1849, and a new house, which was finally closed in 1899, was erected the following year. The importance of the Vestris management of 1831–9 cannot be minimised.

The Olympic Pavilion. See *The Olympic Theatre.*

The Olympic Saloon. See *The Olympic Theatre* and *The Eagle Saloon.*

The Orange-street Theatre (King's-road, Chelsea). This is said to have been used in 1831.

The Pantheon (Oxford-street). The older *Pantheon* had been

[1] *The Percy Anecdotes Original and Select* (1822), p. 168.

burned in 1792[1], but a new house under this name was opened on Thursday, Feb. 27, 1812. It was used only during 1812 and 1813.

The Pavilion (Wych-street, Strand). See *The Olympic Theatre*.

The Pavilion (Whitechapel). See *The Royal Pavilion*.

The Peckham Theatre (High-street, Peckham). This was used in 1828.

The Prince's Theatre (King-street, St James's) [Prince's]. The *St James's* seems to have assumed this name for a time on Monday, April 27, 1840.

The Princess's Theatre (Oxford-street) [P'cess]. The *Princess's* began its history as *The Royal Bazaar*, *The British Diorama and Exhibition of Works of Art* in 1828. The building was burned one year after opening and was re-erected in 1830, when various entertainments were given. In 1834 it seems to have been called *The Queen's* and, after a rebuilding in 1836, *The Court*[2]. In 1840 it became *The Princess's*, and was opened originally (on Wednesday, Sept. 30) for promenade concerts and musical shows. For a number of years foreign opera in English was its chief attraction, mainly directed by one Maddox. In 1850 the theatre was taken over by Charles Kean.

The Queen's Theatre (Fitzroy-square, Tottenham-court-road) [Queen's]. Under this title the Tottenham-street house was opened on Thursday, Feb. 3, 1831 (see *The New Royal Riding School*, *The New Theatre*, *The Regency*, *The Regency Theatre of Varieties*, *The New Royal West London Theatre* and *The Tottenham-street Theatre*). George Macfarren was its first manager. Two years later, it became *The Royal Fitzroy Theatre*, but a reversion was made to the name of *The Queen's* on Monday, Jan. 19, 1835. In 1865, under the management of the Bancrofts, it became *The Prince of Wales's*.

The Regency Theatre (Fitzroy-square, Tottenham-court-road) [Reg.]. Under this title *The New Theatre* was opened on Monday, Oct. 28, 1810, with Moncrieff as manager. It had not a very distinguished career. In 1818 it reopened, after a period of inactivity, as *The Regency Theatre of Varieties*.

The Regency Theatre of Varieties (Fitzroy-square, Tottenham-court-road). The old *Regency* was opened under this name on Thursday, July 17, 1818. In 1820 it became *The New Royal West London Theatre*.

The Royal Adelphi Theatre. See *The Adelphi Theatre*.

The Royal Albert Saloon. See *The Albert Saloon*.

The Royal Amphitheatre (Westminster Bridge Road) [R.A.].

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 230.

[2] I have been unable to verify these statements.

After the burning of the original circus-ring theatre on Friday, July 2, 1803[1], plans were immediately made for a new house, which opened on Monday, April 2, 1804. Its most famous period was between 1830 and 1841, when Ducrow was manager. In 1807 it was called *Astley's Royal Amphitheatre* and in 1808 *Astley's Amphitheatre*. Throughout its career it specialised in equestrian melodrama and spectacle.

The Royal Borough Theatre (Tooley-street, S.E.). This was used between 1834 and 1836, and then destroyed.

The Royal Circus (Blackfriars-road) [R.C.]. A rival of *Astley's*, *The Royal Circus* gained some notoriety through its "burletta" exploits[2]. In 1810 it was taken over by Elliston and renamed *The Surrey Theatre*, but, when Elliston moved to *The Olympic Pavilion* in 1814 and Thomas Dibdin became manager, it was redecorated and rebuilt "on the old plan" and once more named *The Royal Circus* (opened on Monday, July 4, 1814). Its second title (*The Surrey*) was given to it again on Monday, July 5, 1819.

The Royal City of London Theatre (near Bishopsgate Station, Norton Folgate) [C.L.]. This house was opened on Monday, March 27, 1837, by Cockerton, and made a speciality of domestic melodrama. By the middle of the century it had fallen to a very low level, and was eventually closed in 1868[3].

The Royal Clarence Theatre (King's Cross, New-road) [Clar.]. Under this name *The Royal Panarmonion* was opened on Monday, May 21, 1832.

The Royal Coburg Theatre (Waterloo-road) [Cob.]. This theatre was built by Dunn and Jones in 1816, and was opened, "under the patronage of H.R.H. Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg," on Monday, May 11, 1818. The architect was Rudolph Cabanal of Aachen. It had a very deep and narrow stage (94 feet by 32 feet) and in 1820 boasted the possession of a magnificent looking-glass curtain. In 1819 it was managed by Moncrieff; under him and others it indulged in melodrama of the most startling nature, performed before audiences of the "lowest kind." Occasionally, however, West End players of distinction, such as Edmund Kean and Madame Vestris, made their appearance on its boards. In July 1833 it was formally renamed *The Royal Victoria Theatre*.

The Royal Fitzroy Theatre (Fitzroy-square, Tottenham-court-

[1] It had been built in 1777. See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 230.

[2] See *id.* p. 230; and *supra*, p. 140.

[3] On this theatre see M. Williams, *Some London Theatres* (1883).

road). Under this title, *The Queen's* was opened in the autumn of 1833. It was renamed *The Queen's* on Monday, Jan. 19, 1835.

The Royal Kent Theatre (Kensington High-street). This theatre was opened in 1834, and, after a chequered career, was closed in 1840.

The Royal Manor House Theatre (King's-road, Chelsea). This theatre was opened about 1838 and continued its career, partly under the management of E. L. Blanchard, till 1841[1].

The Royal Marylebone Theatre. See *The Marylebone Theatre.*

The Royal Panarmonion Subscription Theatre (King's Cross, New-road). This, the first King's Cross theatre, was opened in the autumn of 1831. The following year it became *The Royal Clarence Theatre.*

The Royal Pavilion, West. See *The New Royal Sussex Theatre.*

The Royal Pavilion (Whitechapel-road, Mile-End). This house, celebrated for "Newgate melodrama," was opened, under the direction of Wyatt and Farrell, on Monday, Nov. 10, 1828. It was burned to the ground in 1856, but, rebuilt, it has continued its activities to the present day, being now the home of Yiddish drama in the East End.

The Royal Princess's Theatre. See *The Princess's Theatre.*

The Royal Standard Theatre (Shoreditch) [Stand.]. This theatre was opened for various entertainments in 1835, when it seated over 2000 people. In 1845 it was remodelled and was opened in January of that year as *The New Standard.* In 1866 it was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1868.

The Royalty Theatre (Wellclose-square) [Royalty]. The old *Royalty* had been built in the eighteenth century by John Palmer[2]. Denied a licence for plays, its managers specialised in spectacular and musical shows. In 1800 it was owned by Philip Astley, who seems to have used it as a winter house. In August 1816 the interior was remodelled, and the new building opened as *The East London Theatre.*

The Royal Victoria Theatre (Waterloo-road) [Vic.]. *The Royal Coburg* definitely changed its name to this title in July 1833[3]. It became one of the most successful of the minors, and was "in a good way" under Abbot in 1834. It has, of course, since won fame for its Shakespeare productions as the "Old Vic."[4]

Sadler's Wells Theatre (Rosebery Avenue, Islington) [S.W.].

[1] See E. L. Blanchard, *Some Managerial Memories* (*The Theatre Annual*, 1885, pp. 16–21).

[2] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 230.

[3] See *The Times* for Tuesday, July 2, 1833.

[4] See Cicely Hamilton and Lilian Baylis, *The Old Vic.* (1926).

The basic structure of this theatre dates back to 1765[1]. Under a variety of managements, and with the aid of the New River, it indulged freely in nautical melodrama, using in 1806 the title of *The Aquatic Theatre*. Charles Dibdin, Thomas King and William Siddons were among its early managers. In 1844 Samuel Phelps adopted it for his remarkable Shakespeare and other "legitimate" productions. His direction continued until 1862. The theatre as standing at present has the distinction of possessing the most ancient fabric of any playhouse in London.

The St James's Theatre (King-street, St James's) [St. J.]. This theatre was opened on Monday, Dec. 14, 1835 by John Braham and for a few years struggled on precariously with musical shows. By 1840 it was "to be let," was renamed *The Prince's* for a short time, and eventually became the home in London of drama in French. Its architect was Samuel Beazley.

The Sans Pareil Theatre (Strand) [Sans P.]. This was built by one Scott and was opened on Friday, Nov. 27, 1806. It had a fair career among the minors and in 1819 was renamed *The Adelphi*.

The Sans Souci Theatre (Leicester-place, Leicester-square) [Sans S.]. As a house of varieties, *The Sans Souci* had been opened by Dibdin in the eighteenth century. It had a chequered career in the nineteenth, sometimes presenting crude farce, sometimes (as *The German*) acting as a home of German drama, sometimes professing, as *The Academic Theatre*, to be a Dramatic Academy. Its importance is slight.

The Standard Theatre. See *The Royal Standard Theatre*.

The Strand Theatre (Strand) [Strand]. This house was opened in 1820 as "Reinagle's and Barker's New Panorama near the New Church in the Strand," which later became "Burford's Panorama." Rebuilt in 1831, the house was opened on Thursday, Jan. 26, 1832, as *The New Strand Subscription Theatre*. A varied career followed. At first extraordinary devices were used to evade the letter of the law, but in 1835 a partial licence was secured, and on April 25, 1836, the playhouse was formally opened under the direction of W. J. Hammond and Douglas Jerrold. William Farren the Younger, who assumed management in 1848, brought it to a state of unprecedented popularity, and it had later glories (after 1858) with burlesque. Even in 1840 it was praised for "its tiny spectacles...humorous burlesques...and spirited actors[2]." The theatre was eventually destroyed to make way for Aldwych Underground Station.

The Surrey Theatre (Blackfriars Road) [Surrey]. Under this

[1] See *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama*, p. 230.

[2] Tomlins, *op. cit.* p. 63.

title *The Royal Circus* was opened under Elliston's management on Monday, April 23, 1810. On July 4, 1814, it reverted to its original name, but became *The Surrey* once more on Monday, July 5, 1819. T. J. Dibdin and R. W. Elliston were its two most famous early managers. In 1827 the latter reassumed control and under his direction the theatre became exceedingly popular. Melodramas of many kinds were exhibited here; comedy and farce under Jerrold were ably interpreted by T. P. Cooke; and sporadic attempts were made in the "legitimate" way. Altogether *The Surrey* was one of the most important of the minors. It was burned down in 1865, to be rebuilt a few years later.

The Theatre of Variety (Catherine-street, Strand). I find this house exhibiting a few shows in October 1823. It was this house which in 1829 was named *The Minor Theatre*.

Tottenham-street Theatre (Fitzroy-square, Tottenham-court-road) [Tottenham]. Under this name, the *Royal West London* was presenting plays in the spring of 1830.

Vauxhall Gardens (Vauxhall) [Vauxhall]. The first records of plays produced here seem to occur in 1826, when Moncrieff became manager. Thereafter a few vaudevilles and operettas were originally produced at the Gardens.

The Westminster Subscription Theatre (Tothill-street, S.W.). Under T. W. Davenport, who had been stage-manager at *The Strand*, this theatre was opened on Thursday, May 17, 1832, and remained open until 1835.

It must be noted that, in addition to these playhouses and places of entertainment, there were a number of private theatres and of saloons where dramatic pieces were occasionally performed.

II. *The Provinces*

Aberdeen. In 1745 and 1751 there are records of outside players performing in a wooden booth somewhere without the city walls. In 1768 there was a *New Inn Theatre* in Castle-street, in 1779 another in Shoe-lane, and about 1780 another in Queen-street. The first permanent playhouse, however, was the old *Marischal-street Theatre Royal*, opened in 1795 under the management of Stephen Kemble. It held £65. Its history is traced by J. Keith Angus in *A Scotch Playhouse* (1875). Aberdeen had a stock company and was also the chief town of a Northern circuit.

Andover. The theatre at Andover, in the Thornton circuit, seems to have been opened early in 1803.

Arbroath. This was in the Ryder circuit, which embraced

Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee. A *New Theatre* was built in 1793 and the Trades Hall was used for plays from 1812.

Aylsham. This town had a "theatre" in 1757, and performances were given there in the nineteenth century.

Bath. A booth of some kind existed at Bath in the early years of the eighteenth century. In 1747 Hippisley started a permanent troupe, but in 1750 a certain John Palmer raised subscriptions for, and erected, a new theatre in *Orchard-street.* This house for long maintained a theatrical monopoly, although a rival theatre existed in 1753–4; and on its reconstruction in 1767 a special patent valid for 21 years was issued to Palmer's son. This was dated Nov. 26, 1767, and was operative from March 25, 1768. This Theatre Royal had a distinguished history in theatrical annals. It was closed in 1805 to give place for the *Beaufort-square Theatre.* This held £300. In 1834 Macready undertook its management, and from 1844 to 1850 Mrs Macready directed its fortunes. Until about 1817 the Bath playhouse was run in close connection with that at Bristol. A regular stock-company was maintained, which was supplemented on occasion by London "stars."

Beccles. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1819.

Beverley. A *Walkergate Theatre* was used in the late eighteenth century by Tate Wilkinson. Its place was taken by *The Playhouse*, opened in 1804. A *Victoria Pavilion* was erected about 1842.

Birmingham. There are records of several theatres in Birmingham in the early eighteenth century, but the first of real importance was the *King-street Theatre* opened in 1751–2. This, after a series of remodellings, was closed in 1780. In 1774–5 another and larger theatre in *New-street* was opened. Burned in 1792, it was rebuilt in 1795. This held £268. W. C. Macready managed it for a decade during the nineteenth century. A patent for a Theatre Royal was obtained in 1807. This house was burned in 1820 and rebuilt the same year.

Bridlington. A theatre, still standing, was opened here about 1803.

Brighton. In 1774 Brighton had a *North-street Theatre* which gave way in 1790 to the *Duke-street Theatre*, a small house, holding £100. This existed till in 1807 a *New-road Theatre* was opened.

Bristol. Bristol had booths in the early eighteenth century, and John Hippisley fitted out a regular *Jacob's Well Theatre* in 1729. The *King-street Theatre* was opened in 1766 and a Royal licence was secured in 1778. Until 1817 Bristol co-operated with Bath.

Bungay. A theatre was built here in 1827 by David Fisher, but a *New Theatre* had been in existence since 1773.

Cheltenham. A theatre was in existence here in the early eighteenth century; see T. Hannam-Clark, *Drama in Gloucestershire* (1928).

Chichester. A theatre was built at Chichester in 1792; it held only £50.

Cirencester. A theatre was built at Cirencester in 1794; see T. Hannam-Clark, *op. cit.* pp. 129–32.

Dereham. David Fisher built a theatre at Dereham in 1816, but the Norwich players had visited the town as early as 1758.

Doncaster. Doncaster, in the York circuit, had a theatre which was opened in 1776.

Dundee. In the Aberdeen circuit, Dundee had a booth or theatre from the second half of the eighteenth century. The Town Hall was used for performances from 1755 to 1767. A *Yeoman Shore* theatre was opened in 1800, a *Theatre Royal* in 1810, and a *Thistle Hall* theatre in 1840. See R. Lawson, *The Story of the Scots Stage* (1917).

Edinburgh. Booths existed in Edinburgh at an early date, and one in *Carrubber's Close* was fitted out by Allan Ramsay in 1736 as a permanent theatre. A *New Concert Hall* in the Cannongate about a decade later was used for dramatic entertainments. This in 1767 became a *Theatre Royal.* It held £70. A new *Theatre Royal* in Prince's-street holding £140 was opened in the winter of 1769. In 1809 a patent was secured by Henry Siddons who opened a *New Theatre Royal* in a house which had been used in 1790 as *The Amphitheatre, or Edinburgh Equestrian Circus.* In 1811 the company moved back to Prince's-street, and the "New Theatre Royal" became, first, *Corri's Pantheon,* and, later, *The Caledonian Theatre* and *The Adelphi.* The Edinburgh theatre had a notable series of managers and important stock-companies. At the *Theatre Royal* some of the finest London actors made their appearance. See J. C. Dibdin, *The Edinburgh Stage* (1888).

Exeter. In the Plymouth circuit, Exeter had an "old" theatre erected in 1749. The *New Theatre* opened in 1787 held £100. It is interesting to note that between 1811 and 1813 Edmund Kean, then unrecognised, appeared on its boards. The management seems to have been a progressive one, for as early as 1817 gas was introduced. A new theatre was opened in 1821 to take the place of the 1787 structure, which had been burned the year previous. This in turn was destroyed in 1885.

Eye. David Fisher built a theatre here in 1815.

Fakenham. A playhouse at Fakenham was in use during the nineties of the eighteenth century.

Glasgow. In 1764 a playhouse was erected, outside the borough,

at the junction of Hope-street and Argyle-street. In 1782 a new house in Dunlop-street, known as *The Caledonian*, was opened. It held £90. A *Queen-street Theatre* holding £260 appeared in 1805, and this was followed by *The York-street Theatre* (opened October 1829), *The Adelphi* (opened December 1842), *The City* (opened May 1845), *The Prince's* (opened January 1849), and *The Queen's* (opened October 1849). The Glasgow theatres had important managers and some brilliant stock-companies. See W. Baynham, *The Glasgow Stage* (1892).

Gloucester. A *Barton-street* Theatre was opened in 1763; the *New Theatre* was opened in 1791.

Grantham. A theatre had been established here as early as the fifties of the eighteenth century; it formed part of the Lincoln circuit.

Halesworth. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1809.

Holt. In 1791 the White Lion Inn was used for dramatic performances and touring actors performed there in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Hull. Hull belonged to the York circuit. The *Lowgate Theatre* was being used in 1768. The following year a *Theatre Royal* was opened in Finkle-street. This was supplanted by a new *Theatre Royal* in Humber-street, opened in 1810 and burned in 1859. Another house, first a circus (1820), then called the *Sans Pareil* (1825), the *Minor* (1826), the *Summer* (1827) and the *Clarence* (1831), was eventually pulled down in 1836. A third playhouse, the *Adelphi*, was opened in 1827, while the *Royal Amphitheatre* (1846) and the *Queen's* (1847) added a further element of competition.

King's Lynn. St George's Hall was used for performances till a *Theatre Royal* was erected in 1815. This is still standing.

Leeds. Also in the York circuit, Leeds had a theatre by 1771.

Leicester. In 1750 the first permanent theatre was built at Leicester. A *New Theatre* was opened in 1800 and was closed in 1836.

Lewes. Lewes possessed a booth theatre in the nineteenth century.

Liverpool. Beyond a series of booths Liverpool does not seem to have had a regular theatre till on June 5, 1772, a patented house was opened in Williamson-square. In 1821 *The Royal Court Theatre*, then known as *The Royal Amphitheatre*, was opened.

Lowestoft. A theatre built here by David Fisher in 1827.

Maidstone. The first records of performances at Maidstone seem to be those connected with the performances of a summer company in 1757 led by Wignell. For a time the rude theatre

there was run by a Mrs Baker. The *New Theatre*, which held £60, in the High-street was opened on April 12, 1798.

Manchester. Various booths existed in Manchester in the early eighteenth century. In 1775 was opened a *Theatre Royal* in Spring-gardens. This was burned in 1789 and a new building erected on the same site in 1790. A *New Theatre Royal* in Fountain-street was opened in 1807; this was also burned in 1844, and another *Theatre Royal* in Peter-street was opened in 1845. W. C. Macready was manager from 1807 to 1809. An *Amphitheatre* was opened in 1793. Manchester formed part of the Derby circuit. See W. T. Baker, *The Manchester Stage* (1903).

Margate. Margate was part of a Kent circuit which apparently was established by William Smith in 1762. At this time the performances took place in a converted barn. Charles Mate, who took over the circuit in 1779, succeeded in gaining a patent, and a *Theatre Royal*, holding £80, was opened on June 27, 1787. In the nineteenth century, Margate ceased to be part of a regular circuit and the theatre was open in the summer months only.

Newbury. A *New Theatre* was opened here in November 1802.

Newcastle. This formed part of a regular Newcastle circuit. A *Theatre Royal* was opened in 1789 and a *New Theatre Royal* in 1837.

North Walsham. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1828.

Norwich. This was one of the chief towns in a Norwich circuit. Plays were presented here in the early eighteenth century at the *White Swan Inn.* In 1758 Thomas Ivory opened *The New Theatre*, near Chapel Field, and a formal licence was granted in 1768. This house was enlarged in 1801. The later *Theatre Royal* (the house standing today) was opened in 1826. For this and other theatres in the circuit see T. L. G. Burley, *Playhouses and Plays in East Anglia* (1928).

Perth. This town was in Corbett Ryder's circuit. The Glovers' Hall was used for plays in 1786. A *New Theatre*, in the disused Grammar School, was opened in 1810 and closed in 1819. A *Theatre Royal* was opened in August 1820.

Plymouth. An early eighteenth century house, which held £75, was rebuilt in 1804. This formed part of a Plymouth circuit.

Portsmouth. Little seems to be known of the earlier history of the Portsmouth theatre; it formed part of the Winchester circuit.

Reading. In 1788 a theatre in Friar-street, holding £40, was erected by Thornton.

Richmond. A theatre which was regarded as "a model for

theatrical architects" was in existence here in the early nineteenth century. The town was regularly served during the summer months by the London performers.

Sheffield. Early performances were given in the yard of the Angel Inn; a permanent theatre was built in 1762. For a number of years Tate Wilkinson was manager and included the town in various circuits.

Southampton. A *New Theatre* in French-street, holding £100, was opened in 1803.

Stroud. On the theatres at Stroud and Tewkesbury see T. Hannam-Clark, *op. cit.* pp. 132–7.

Sudbury. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1814.

Swaffham. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1822.

Tunbridge Wells. Tunbridge Wells belonged to the West Kent circuit. Various early performances are chronicled for the period 1700–1800; in 1770 Mrs Baker built there a regular playhouse. A new building was opened on July 8, 1802.

Wakefield. In the York circuit, Wakefield had a theatre from the seventies of the eighteenth century.

Wells. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1812.

Winchester. A theatre is recorded at Winchester as early as 1760, although the first regular playhouse was not erected till 1785. This held £60.

Windsor. The Windsor theatre, erected in 1793, was a summer house only and depended largely on royal residence at the Castle. It held £70.

Woodbridge. A theatre was built here by David Fisher in 1814.

Yarmouth. Various makeshift theatres were used here in the early eighteenth century. The present *Theatre Royal*, opened in 1778, is one of the oldest theatres in England.

York. The chief town in an important circuit, York had a royal patent dating from 1759.

III. *The Old Circuits*

Aberdeen. The Northern circuit included, in addition to Aberdeen, the towns of Perth, Montrose and Dundee.

Bath and Bristol. This hardly formed a regular circuit, but until 1817 the theatrical activities of the two towns were closely associated.

Exeter. Plymouth, Weymouth and Exeter for long years were connected by a regular circuit.

Kent. The Kent circuit originally included the following towns: Margate, Canterbury, Dover, Deal, Maidstone, Faversham and

Rochester. Later there was a division made between the East and West Kent circuits.

Manchester. The Manchester circuit included, with Manchester itself, Shrewsbury, Chester, Lichfield and (usually) Buxton.

Newcastle. The earlier circuit included Newcastle, Lancaster, Chester, Whitehaven and Preston. Later the towns visited were Newcastle, Scarborough, Durham, Sunderland, South and North Shields, Stockton, Darlington and Coventry.

Norfolk and Suffolk. Organised by the Fishers; included Halesworth, Wells, Woodbridge, Sudbury, Eye, Dereham, Beccles, Swaffham, Lowestoft, Bungay, North Walsham, Thetford and Newmarket.

Norwich. The order of the Norwich circuit was usually Yarmouth, Ipswich, Norwich, Yarmouth, Bury, Colchester, Ipswich, Norwich, Lynn, Norwich and so back to Yarmouth [see also under Norwich, p. 232].

Winchester. This circuit included Portsmouth, Winchester, Southampton, Chichester and Newport.

York. One of the chief circuits, and that with which Tate Wilkinson in the eighteenth century, and J. P. Kemble in the nineteenth, were associated, included, besides the city of York, Hull, Wakefield, Leeds, Pontefract and Doncaster. [See Thomas Sheppard, *Evolution of the Drama in Hull and District* (1917).]

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